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The Black Cat

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The Black Cat

A Bead In the Baron's Rosary

BY WAKELEIGH RHODES

The spirit of Christmas has a way of its own of creeping into strange places and strange hearts. Read this real story of a world-broken Baron and the touch of the Christmas spirit he gave a sordid café and its cheap Bohemia.

THE Baron pushed open the swinging door and entered the little restaurant with the air of an habitué. That he was a well-known patron was evidenced by the manner in which the head waiter greeted him, and leading the way directly to a little table in the corner, himself pulled out the tipped up chair and hung up the Baron's great-coat, first shaking the snow flakes from his collar. The fact that the lining of the coat was worn and the s ams were shiny, in no way lessened his respectful attitude.

It was early—barely ten o'clock—and the place had few occupants as yet, for Josef's was essentially a resort of the night-hawks of a semi-Bohemia. Eminently respectable, yet with an air of fellowship that thawed the ice of conventionality and brought a smile or word of greeting to the lips of those who never saw each other elsewhere, it had become a sort of "poor man's club." Night after night, the same faces gathered around some of the little tables, as one might observe if the air were not too blue with smoke. Often the good wives accompanied their husbands and stared, open-eyed and open-mouthed, at the gaily dressed crowd that thronged in after the neighboring theatres were closed.

The few who were scattered about the room observed the Baron with interest. His tall figure and military carriage would have attracted attention anywhere. A close observer might notice the lines around his eyes, which belied the youth in his step. The casual observer would merely remark how blue the eyes themselves were. The mouth, too, had a tired and almost pathetic droop to it, masked behind the blonde moustache still worn in loyal imitation of his Emperor. It was the stiffly up-turned corners of the moustache and the occasional flash of strong, white teeth, that gave the effect of a smile. His blonde hair was getting sparse on top, and his long, thin, nervous hands had also begun to show that the man was no longer young, though still defying age. No one knew why he had deserted his Fatherland for New York. If it had been to flirt with Dame Fortune, she

had proved a fickle jade, as his attire plainly showed. However, though his clothes were shiny, they were always well-brushed. His linen might be frayed at the edges but it was invariably clean, and his nails were always polished to the perfection his boots might only aspire to.

Every Saturday night he appeared at Josef's where the little table in the corner, near the piano, was reserved for him, and he ordered his simple repast with the fastidious air of a man who knew how. Tonight his shoulders drooped with unwonted weariness as he carefully studied the menu card.

There was an especial air of festivity about the place, for it was Christmas Eve. Wreaths of holly and ropes of evergreen brightened the dark wood-work and framed the paintings on the wall, which were the pride of Josef's heart. The Acropolis by Moonlight, had the place of honor at the end of the room, but was nobly flanked by a wonderful Castle on the Rhine, and a Sunset over the Sahara.

At the piano, a slim, dark-eyed young fellow, with a shock of black curly hair, pounded out the strains of "Get Out and Get Under," while an occasional nasal soprano, wheezy tenor or guttural bass, joined in the chorus, for it was the custom at Josef's for those with music in their souls to give audible expression of it.

It was some time before the Baron gave his order, for it took careful consideration to decide whether to eliminate fish or salad from his menu. This momentous question being disposed of, he leaned back in his chair and began a leisurely survey of the other patrons. It was a motley assembly, from the pink-cheeked, hard-mouthed young woman with the turquoise ear-drops, who looked back at him an instant too long, to the frowsy, anarchistic-looking individual holding forth in loud tones to a group of sober working men, or the family party of voluble Hebrews on the other side of the room.

"Gut efening, Herr Baron," said a voice at his elbow, "und a Merry Chris'mas I vish you!"

A rotund little man, with a straight cut fringe of grey hair, and a shiny frock coat buttoned tightly over his portly person, stood beside him bowing and beaming.

"Ah, Professor," the Baron exclaimed. "I thank you! If not exactly merry it may at least be peaceful."

"For me—" beamed the professor, "it is of the happiest! Mein little daughter, she haf return to me. She haf been mit an aunt, in der old country, since mein gut wife died—und now she come und keep mein house und make once more a home for me."

"So? It is well," the Baron nodded approvingly.

"Herr Baron—would you—vill you, the honor do us—" the little man stammered, for the Baron was a personage— "to drink mit us—er—to our happiness und because it is Christmas Eve?"

"With pleasure," repled the Baron, who had been trying to decide between unlimited Pilsener and a pint of Chianti by way of a holiday treat—on credit.

"Mein daughter, Othilie," the little man waved his hand toward the next table, and the Baron rose, and putting his heels together, bowed with military precision. Reseating himself, he turned his chair so as to face their adjoining table. This brought him into better view of the piano, and he nodded friendly to the young musician, who failed to see the salutation.

Looking more sharply, he observed that the young man was ghastly pale beneath his shock of black hair. He was playing mechanically and with brief intervals between his selections. The strains of "My Hero—" had hardly died away before the "Stein Song" began.

The room was rapidly filling with a laughing holiday crowd, that took up the song with a vim and piped or roared it at everyone in general and nobody in particular.

Conversation being impossible, the Baron looked at the rosy-cheeked little German girl at the next table with more interest, and she, smiling, raised two shy china-blue eyes to his. He started slightly, for the eyes and the expression were those of the wife of his youth.

Poor little Minna! Before him flashed again the vivid picture of those childish blue eyes, wild with horror—when they told her that their baby was dead—and he seemed to feel her little fingers clasped around his own once more, growing colder and colder to the end. And he remembered just how they had laid the little dead babe in the little dead mother's arms—and how long the picture had been with him, by night and by day, for he had given her his first love, and thought, perhaps, she would have fallen behind had they travelled far along life's road together, for she was only a pet and a plaything at best, she had been sweetly stupid, and the memory of the sweetness lingered when the stupidity was forgotten.

"Mit a shtein on der table," droned the professor, "und a so-ong in de air—"

The music stopped with a crash, and the young musician mopped his clammy forehead and wiped his damp hands with a red handkerchief.

"The Rosary! The Rosary!" shouted someone.

"Yes; give us 'The Rosary—'" others took it up.

There was a moment's pause, and then in the hush that followed, the first few solemn chords fell on the air. Then a strange thing happened. The man's nerveless hands fell on the keys with a discordant crash, his head went forward on his out-stretched arms, and a groan of utter agony escaped his lips. The piano was so placed that only those in that corner of the room could see what had happened. In a moment the Baron was beside him.

"Anton,—my boy—what is it?" he asked.

At first there was no answer. Then, "My wife!" he gasped, "she is dying —perhaps already dead. Oh, *mein Gott!*"

"Dying!" the Baron exclaimed. "Why, what is the trouble?"

The tears were rolling down the young fellow's cheeks. "The child," he sobbed, "it was born today—a boy, too, and I was so proud and happy—and now—my wife—" He put his

hand to his throat and stopped, choking.

"But why are you here? Why are you not with her?" the Baron questioned sternly.

"That Josef, he is a hard man! It is only money, money of which he thinks. I begged him to let me off tonight. He said if I did not come tonight, I need not come at all again."

A good Teutonic oath passed the Baron's lips and the professor, hovering near, repeated it in italics.

"No one could I get to come tonight," the lad went on, "and there is the doctor to pay, and the nurse, and good food for the little chap, and medicines for the wife, to buy. Oh, *mein Gott*,—I *must* come! Already I owe—seventy dollars I owe. One year must I work yet till I should get it paid up. Just this one night, I beg that Josef that he give me. But no! It is Chris'-mas Eve! Huh! All must be gay! There must be music—music here though somewhere's breaks hearts—" He broke down, sobbing once more.

The Baron put a kind hand on his shoulder. "See here, my boy," he said. "I had a wife once—yes, and a child, too. They are dead—both dead. It is hard, I know,—but perhaps your wife may live yet. One cannot always tell. Now I tell you what you do. You go home to her as quickly as you can—" He raised his hand to the other's look of protest—"and I will take your place here, for as you say, it is Christmas Eve and there must be music—"

But Anton interrupted. "Oh, Herr Baron, you are too good! It is too great a kindness! I cannot accept!"

Again the Baron raised his hand. "Ah, but you shall pay me," he said, a smile in his eyes. "How much would you get?"

"Seventy-five cents," Anton answered, abashed.

"Very well," said the Baron. "Then you shall give me fifty of it—and you will return as soon as possible and let me know the news."

Anton rose from the piano stool and opened his lips to speak, but no sound came. He put his hand to his throat and swallowed hard, his suffused eyes looking at the Baron as if he feared a joke. The Baron read his thoughts and spoke sternly: "Come, come, why do you wait? Go at once! The wife needs you!" Without further delay, the man rushed from the room.

The old professor's eyes were misty and Othilie wore a look of adoration. Only those nearby had heard, but as the Baron seated himself at the piano, and without any preliminary, beyond a few compelling chords, began to play, there was a general craning of necks and buzz of inquiry. It was the hand of a master that drew such music from the much-abused instrument, and it responded as though conscious of the fact.

There was an attentive hush as the rippling, lilting cadences dripped from his finger-tips, and then he fell into an old Yule-tide song, with a voice still rich, and the professor boomed in on the chorus, and one by one the others took it up—even the shy Othilie raising a pure bird-like soprano.

This was different music from what the patrons of Josef's were accustomed to, and though they gradually joined in the singing of the old Christ-

mas carols with lusty voices and right good will, a certain solemnity fell over the usually noisy revelers. And when at last he played with gentle touch—

"Oh, little town of Bethlehem, how still I see thee lie!" there was a touch of *heim-weh* in many hearts, and a hint of moisture in many eyes. Unconsciously their gaze sought the pictures on the wall most nearly suggesting the "little town" dearest to their own memories, and while the corporeal forms, some gross, some fair, seemed to fill the sordid little room, scarcely a spirit remained in Josef's. The blue haze of the tobacco smoke might have been a cloud of astral forms starting on a journey through space to the four corners of the globe. The Baron's eyes were fixed on the desert as he played. Did it not typify his own state more nearly than the Castle on the Rhine? That at least, was a home—and his mind went back—back to those early days when he had not been a wanderer on the face of the Footstool—back so persistently to the wife of his youth, that the face of Othilie, shining like a star through the haze, with the adoration still in her eyes, seemed *her face*—and he struck into the triumphant, yet tender chords of "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," almost as if it were a pæan of praise and gratitude to *her*, the little German *madchen*, with the holy, hyacinthine eyes.

And then the stricture in his throat became painful, and the room and his surroundings were blotted out with the hard birth of unaccustomed tears, and for a moment everything seemed black, black—and nothing was real—*dead*—with the little dead babe in her arms. His hands dropped nerveless as Anton's own, but the hush went unnoticed, so deeply steeped in memories were the cups from which they all had quaffed.

The frowsy, anarchistic-looking individual was the one to break the spell.

"Give us some rag-time, Brother. This ain't no Sunday-school picnic," he shouted, and the girl with the turquoise ear-drops and the hard red mouth, shamefacedly brushed the tears from her eyes, and a babel of voices and too shrill laughter arose as the souls came back into their prison cells of clay.

The Baron gathered his forces and rose from the piano, holding up his long, slim hand with a gesture that commanded silence.

"It is Christmas Eve," he began, "so by all means let us eat, drink, and be merry, but first I should like to tell you a little story—old as Creation, yet new in every heart—" and with the consummate skill of one who had eaten of the fruit of knowledge, and drained the cup of life to the dregs—who had lived, and loved, and suffered—he told the simple little tale of Anton and his young wife to whom a son had just been given. He told of the poverty, of the sting of the lash on the naked soul, that had brought the youth to labor even on that night, that his loved ones might be fed—that Death himself might, perchance, be balked of his prey—of the spectre—

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 50)

The Man Without a Name

BY DON MARK LEMON

Many times a millionaire, as a penalty for a crime committed, a man forfeits his name and goes into the world nameless.

HE gnawed his moustache in suspicious thought. This man had him wholly in his power, and yet proposed to let him go scot-free on the mere condition that he should become a man without a name! He had feared that the other would demand as the price of his silence some excessive sum of money—perhaps a million dollars—or have made some other heavy terms the price of his silence, but, instead, he had demanded merely that he should give up his name and thenceforth be nameless.

He considered. Yes, the thing could be done. What particular use, anyway, was a name? Let men call him by letter or number. No! He must not take even a letter or number by which to distinguish or identify himself. Well, then, let others address him without giving him name, letter, or number. Just address him, that's all. This was better than that his crime should be discovered, and the state mete out its frightful penalty—death! Better, too, than that he should pay out his dearly gotten millions for silence.

"Do you accept these terms?"

The Man who was shortly to be without a name bit his moustache. "Yes," he finally said.

"Then—remember!—I shall set spies on your track, and that day and hour I hear of your using a name, either written or spoken, true or false, I shall expose to the authorities this crime of which you are guilty, and you know only too well the penalty that will follow such an exposure." The other winced at these words. "You have dishonored the name that our family has borne in honor for generations, and now I will teach you what it is to have no name. I have done with you. Go!"

The Man without a Name turned and quit the room. Upon reaching the street he laughed contemptuously.

"The fool! What's in a name, anyway? Money will serve me better than the name of our proud race." He walked along considering.

"Let me see. Yes, the best thing for me to do just at present is to travel—somewhere where I'm not known. That will save unpleasant complications."

He turned into a public telephone station and called up the railroad office and ordered reserved a chair and berth from New York to Chicago.

"What name?" asked the ticket agent.

The Man without a Name caught back his words just in time. He almost had given himself a name—the old name.

"Put the ticket by and I'll call for it at two-thirty."

"Name, please," came the curt reply.

The Man without a Name looked around. Almost at his elbow stood a stranger, watching him. A spy!

"I say I will call at two-thirty."

"Wont do! Name, please."

"Never mind. I'll call at the office." He hung up the receiver and quit the telephone booth. Again he laughed contemptuously. "Pooh! a trifling vexation, easily avoidable. Hereafter I will call in person."

A little later he presented himself at the ticket office and purchased the limited ticket, but when the agent handed him a pen and told him to put his signature to the coupon, the Man without a Name suddenly found himself in a dilemma. He dare not sign the ticket. To give himself a name, even that of The Man Without a Name, would mean—death!

He peered around like a criminal, and there, almost at his elbow, watching him, was the spy.

"Never mind," he said. "I'll take the ticket with me and sign it later. I've the writer's cramp just now and can't use my fingers."

He paid for the ticket, and left the office, scheming to travel on it unsigned.

Reaching his hotel, he found a number of important papers awaiting his signature, but he was a Man without a Name, written or spoken, false or true. He could not sign the papers.

Yes, he would need money for his travels. He got out his check book and started to write a check, payable to himself, but suddenly the pen dropped from his hand. He was a Man without a Name—no longer could he sign a check.

He looked up with beads of perspiration on his forehead and saw the keyhole of the hall door was darkened. With an oath, he arose, and light streamed through the keyhole!

But he *must* have money. He went through his pockets and found a five-dollar bill, the change he had received after paying for his railroad ticket. Then he recalled that only that morning he had emptied his cash box. He cursed himself for a fool, and thought of the sum lying in the bank, not a cent of which he could draw without the use of his name.

He now saw that he had been caught in as cunning a trap as the ingenuity of man ever had devised. But, bah! it was preposterous. He was rich—ten times over a millionaire—and what hands had ever forged a lock that a key of gold could not open? He *would* have money—not other men's money, but his own. He would have it, and at once. It threw him in a rage to think that he should even fear that he might not have what was his own.

Again he took up his check book, and as he did so he was aware of that eye at the keyhole. He arose and leapt to the door, but the spy had fled.

The room was stifling now, and he went out into the street. He considered. He could no longer make a power of attorney so that another might represent him and draw what money he should need, or transact his business in his stead. No name, no power of attorney. Where his

name had stopped, everything had stopped. It was the jumping off place of credit. He was less than an infant in the eyes of the law.

"Hell!" he almost snarled, "who'd have thought a name so important?"

A friend accosted him. "Hallo, what's wrong? Wheat?"

The Man without a Name grasped the speaker by the arm. "How much money have you got with you?" he demanded.

The other was a little taken aback. "Oh, fifty dollars. Why?"

"Loan me it?"

The friend laughed good-naturedly. "On your I. O. U."

"No!" The Man without a Name turned and hurried away, while the other looked after him in amazement. "Wheat must be cornered," he soliloquized.

Yes, he would leave New York for a while at least. He clearly foresaw the consequences of remaining longer there without a name. He returned to his hotel and gathering some wearing apparel into a suitcase, took the next train for Chicago. He passed the gatekeeper on the unsigned ticket, but when the train had got about fifty miles out, the conductor came through the car and refused to accept the ticket until properly signed.

"I have the writer's cramp and can't sign it."

"Then you must make a cross, and be identified."

"I'm a stranger in these parts—who's going to identify me?"

"I will."

It was a former friend of the Man without a Name.

"That will be sufficient," said the conductor, who knew the gentleman who had last spoken. "Put a cross here, please."

"No!" The Man without a Name arose. He dared not make the cross; it would be a signature—a name. Watching him through the glass of the vestibule was the spy.

"Sorry, sir, but you can't go beyond the next station unless you make a cross on the ticket."

At the next station the Man without a Name left the car. He saw that to be without a name could make a man more helpless than to be blind.

He engaged a cheap room, and throwing himself moodily on the bed, considered his situation. He still had what remained of the five-dollar bill. When that was gone, what would he do? Work, beg, steal or starve?

He got up and raged about the room. Why had he not considered the full consequences of surrendering his name? He could not even write a letter home to his lawyer, since he no longer had a name to identify himself. He could not so much as pawn his overcoat. A signature would be necessary for the pawn books. However, he could sell it, and—ten times a millionaire—he went out and sold his overcoat at a second-hand clothing shop.

He was fast coming up to the edge of things. He broke the last dollar he had in his pockets, got a cheap breakfast, and went out to hunt work. He sought all day, unsuccessfully. Three times he could have got employment if each time when asked for a name he had not been compelled to reply that he had no name. They looked at him pityingly or fearfully,

as the case was, and sent him on his way.

He saw how things stood. He must get down so low that no name would be required of him. He bought a wood-saw, rent and muddied his clothing, and applied at back doors to saw wood. All this time the spy followed him, waiting and watching.

After three days of hard physical labor he threw down the saw with an oath. He would beg his way back to New York and try to capitulate with the man who had him in his power. He took the railroad track, with the spy following him, and two days later, dead beat out, unshaved, dirty, he reached his home city. A policeman caught him begging a cup of coffee and that same night he slept in jail with a horde of drunks and petty thieves.

Next morning, when he was brought up before the judge for sentence, he refused to give his name, saying that he had none. There chanced to be present a clerk who knew him well, and who whispered to the judge that the seeming beggar was a well-known New York millionaire.

There followed a long conference among the officials, a significant touching of the forehead, telephoning, swift running to and fro, and that night the Man without a Name slept in a room where the walls were thick and padded.

He demanded his release; he plead; he cursed. He showed himself perfectly reasonable until they asked him his name, when he would reply that he had no name.

The consulting physicians shook their heads and sighed. It was too bad; ten times a millionaire and to be stricken like that.

A nurse came in with some food. The Man without a Name turned and stood face to face with the spy who had followed him for days past. He sat down and laughed foolishly.

The Blade of Truth

BY ROSS ELLIS

With the help of a Sultan of Turkey, a too-trusting young man of wealth learns the sudden and startling truth of certain transactions from a friend and broker.

FREDDY GRAYSON laid the long, curved weapon on the desk before which he sat, where the sunlight sparkled on its golden hilt and gem-studded scabbard. It was an alluring thing, and as he pushed it toward the curio dealer, there was an expression of regret on his smooth, boyish face. Nevertheless, with the plans he had in mind, this was no time to accumulate excess baggage.

Saul Ashcroft waved his fat hands in a gesture of protest.

"But this is something unique," he pleaded. "Genuine loot from the old Sultan's palace. There's a Turk over on the East Side who has all the dope on the lot this came out of. I'll bet that ancient cheese-knife has a history that would stir your hair."

Grayson shook his blonde head decisively.

"I haven't time to talk about it. A man is coming here at three o'clock on mighty important business, and—" he looked at his watch—"it's almost three now."

"Think it over. Think it over," urged the curio dealer, getting to his feet and waddling toward the door. "I'll leave it with you for an hour or so while I attend some auctions." He was gone before the other could voice a protest.

Left alone, Freddy Grayson leaned back luxuriously in his rickety swivel chair, put his feet on his battered old desk, and resumed the day-dreaming which the curio dealer's visit had interrupted.

Looking about him it was hard to realize that he was indeed a man of wealth. The dingy old office was the same in which, for five years, he had earned a precarious living as an architect. His modest personal expenditures had not greatly increased. Yet—so Charlie Gordon had assured him—his income was nothing short of princely.

Three months before, when word came that, through lack of other heirs, the millions of a maternal aunt had fallen in his lap, Grayson had felt almost more startled than pleased. His own limited experience had taught him nothing of the handling of such wealth. He knew little of investments, the value of this bond or that stock, and he felt no urgent desire to know. What he desired most was freedom. If wealth meant added responsibility, he wanted none of it.

Therefore he had sent for "Honest Charlie" Gordon, who had won his title fairly in ten years of Wall Street trading, and who was, moreover, a trusted friend. Gordon had patiently hacked away the undergrowth of legal

impediment and made the path clear for Grayson to come into his own. He had tested the worth of the widely scattered properties, converted some doubtful securities into cash, made advantageous exchanges of others, and had an infinitely more accurate knowledge of the condition of the estate than did its owner.

This was the day he had appointed to render an accounting of his stewardship, and to thrust the helm of the treasure-galleon into Grayson's unwilling hands. Freddy had other plans. And as he considered those plans, the door opened to admit his financial advisor.

"Help! Help!" ejaculated Gordon, laughingly, as his eye caught the glittering weapon on the desk.. "It is to be 'off with his head,' I see, if a single sequin is missing."

Grayson felt a sudden rush of pleasure and gratitude at the sight of that lean, keen face, brown with the tan of the motor-enthusiast. It was a shrewd face. The deep-set grey eyes were sharp, and the battering years had chiseled grim lines about the thin-lipped mouth. Gordon was in his early thirties, but he had been doing a man's work in the days when Grayson was loafing through Harvard, and he radiated a sense of maturity and sound judgment. He was a striking contrast to the new-made millionaire, whose unlined brow and eager eyes showed plainly that the years of unsuccess had destroyed few of his illusions.

Seated in the chair which the curio dealer had recently vacated, Gordon drew from his pocket several folded sheets of paper.

"Now, Fred," he said, "I want you to pay close attention to what I say and try to get a grasp of your affairs. The bulk of your fortune seems to be in pretty good shape, though some of these industrial stocks need rather close watching. I'll go through the whole list, item by item, and if there is anything you don't understand, stop me and I'll explain."

For the better part of an hour, the rich, vibrant voice talked steadily on, and for a while Grayson listened. The power that was his, the opportunities to pit his wits against those of designing rascals, might have stirred the blood of another man. But he was conscious only of a vast weariness and of a growing desire to be away from all this stress and fret.

In his pocket was an unanswered letter from Jerry Harkness begging that he join him on his steam yacht Rosario for a cruise that might be over in six months and might extend into a leisurely stroll around the globe.

Before him rose a picture of blue water, of long lazy days, of whimsical side jaunts into queer harbors, and all the mystical, glamorous possibilities that attend the path of the care-free adventurer.

"And that," the broker concluded, "seems to be all." He handed Grayson the long typewritten list. "The papers on all these items are in my deposit vaults, and you can get them tomorrow and have them transferred to your own."

Grayson felt like an inattentive school-boy as he realized that most of the careful explanation and advice had not even been heard. He gave

the list a perfunctory glance and put it in his pocket.

"Is it all clear to you?" demanded Gordon.

"I'm not sure that it is," said Grayson with a sheepish grin, "but it's as clear as it ever will be."

The broker looked at him sharply.

"Just that," Grayson answered the unspoken question.

"Are you crazy, man?"

"Not crazy enough to spend my life grubbing for more money when there's fun to be had in the world. Finance is a good game for men like you. Well, play it."

He tossed over the letter from Harkness.

"Read that," he said, "and you'll have my program for the next six months or more. After that I follow the trail of the thistle-down—where the wind bloweth."

Gordon read the letter, then laid it on the desk and looked at the other in apparent distress.

"A big fortune can't be left to look out for itself," he expostulated. "There are enough tangles in your Nevada copper interests alone to keep an active man busy for two years. Who is to watch the markets and take advantage of the overnight movements that are likely to occur at any time? Who is to do any of the thousand-and-one things that are always coming up in a scattered estate like this?"

"You are."

"I?" Gordon stared in amazement.

"Of course. Draw up what papers you need to enable you to handle my affairs as if they were your own, and leave me free to play for a while."

The broker eyed Grayson with an expression dangerously near contempt. He picked up Ashcroft's ornate weapon which lay on the flat desk between them. His long forefinger followed the delicate tracery on the hilt.

"A scabbarded steel," he said bitterly. "That's what a fortune is in the hands of a man like you. Fred, with that huge basis to build on, you could be a real power in the financial world in ten years. Why can't such things come to men who know how to use them? In my hands your plaything fortune, like your plaything sword, would become"— he tugged at the hilt—"a weapon!"

He tugged in vain. The glittering blade did not flash out to complete the simile. After a moment he gave up the attempt and turned to Grayson with a rueful smile.

"Forgive my heroics, old man," he apologized. "I've been dealing in other people's money for a good many years, without accumulating very much of my own. It rather got on my nerves to see you so indifferent to an opportunity I'd give my eyes for."

He walked over to the window and stood watching the crowds in the street below with an air of dreamy abstraction.

"But you'll do it, Charlie," urged Grayson. "Name your own salary or percentage or whatever arrangement you want. I'm sick for freedom. The mere idea of taking up such a burden appalls me."

The broker did not reply.

"Of course you will," persisted Grayson. "I want to answer Hark-

ness tonight and tell him I'll be aboard the Rosario within a week.

Gordon returned to his chair and looked at the other uneasily. There was a curious jerky note in his voice when he spoke.

"I—I suppose so," he muttered. "Yes, since you insist, I'll take charge of all your properties and handle them as if they were my own."

"Good old Charlie!" exulted Freddy.

"As if they were my own," said Gordon again, in so strange a voice that Grayson started in surprise.

The broker was leaning forward on the desk, supporting his head on his left hand, the other drawing aimless figures on the blotter. He seemed to be in a deep study.

Suddenly he dropped the hand which concealed his face and folded his arms on the desk. "As if they were my own," he repeated thickly. "They will be my own before I get through."

His face was colorless and as void of expression as a blank wall. The pupils of his eyes had contracted to the size of pin-heads.

"Gordon, you are ill!" Grayson hurried to his friend's side and laid a hand on his arm. The broker gazed at the blotter with unseeing eyes, evidently oblivious of the other's presence.

"I left the Brixton Lode and the Undervetter timber lands out of the list," he went on in a leaden monotone, "and he didn't miss them, though they're worth half a million. Give me a year, and—"

"Jimmie! Jimmie!" called Grayson wildly. The office boy appeared at the door with suspicious promptness. "Run to Doctor Blake's office at the end of the hall and tell him to come here at once. Something has happened to Mr. Gordon."

The droning voice had ceased, and Gordon sat huddled over his folded arms, his vacant eyes fixed on the blotter before him. Presently his body sagged gently forward, and Grayson eased him down on the desk just as the portly doctor hurried into the room.

"Huh! The man seems to be drugged!" exclaimed Blake after timing the pulse and drawing back the lids from the closed eyes. "Did you see him swallow anything? Is he in trouble? Could this be an attempt at suicide?"

To all of these questions the young millionaire returned an emphatic negative.

"Suicide is ridiculous," he asserted. "Charlie Gordon has no troubles that I know of, and up to ten minutes ago he seemed in excellent spirits. Then he suddenly began to look so queerly and to talk such nonsense that I knew something was wrong. So I sent for you."

"What sort of nonsense?"

Grayson felt his face flush hotly.

"Just—just nonsense," he answered lamely.

Doctor Blake favored him with a curious glance.

"Huh!" he grunted again. "Help me carry your friend down to my office and I'll try to bring him out

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The Honors of War

BY W. T. NICHOLS

It is a relief to turn from the newspaper stories of the horrors of modern sea fighting to this account of the adventures of a peaceable Yankee, shanghied to man a fighting ship in the Caribbean.

HE Baillie Dutton, anchored in the roadstead of a sleepy Caribbean port, was not a pretty ship, even as tramps go. She was a lump of a boat, painted a dull gray, heavy bowed and high pooped, with squat funnel and stumpy pole-masts.

A thin wisp of smoke from her stack showed her fires were going; at the cable office, they had word at which house of refreshment her skipper was to be found. "Waiting for orders," was the waterside verdict. The Baillie Dutton had come from somewhere south of the Line; it lay with her owner which port north of Hatteras she was to seek.

Another steamer rounded the point and crept toward the anchorage. She was as unlike the Baillie Dutton as a grayhound is unlike a mastiff; for she had fine lines, a clipper stem, and sharply raking masts and stack. Forward, she carried a rapid-fire gun; its mate was aft. Over her stern flaunted a gaudy flag, at sight of which the waterfront rubbed its eyes.

Half a dozen shore boats put off, but none seemed eager to venture too near the stranger. Over on the bridge of the Baillie Dutton, Hager, the first officer, squinted hard at the flag.

"Look you well, Manning!" he chuckled. "'Tis a rare treat—first peep at the brand-new rag of the latest foundling laid on the doorstep of the nations. Yon gay buccaneer'll be the Barcelona, no less!"

"The Barcelona!" There was keen interest in the second officer's tone; for a craft of note was the one sailing under the name. Cruiser de luxe of a spendthrift millionaire; charters each a trifle shadier than the next before it; filibuster all but caught in the act; sale to Junta in charge of the latest Central American revolution—such was the widely known record of a marine rake's progress. "Barcelona, eh? What's she doing here? Why ain't she where she belongs, fighting for the outs and against the ins?"

"Aye, lad, but this is safer," quoth Hager. "If you'd just laid in a warship, maybe you'd be for keeping it a while to see how you liked it."

There was a long pause; then said Manning: "They've dropped a boat and it's heading for us. What's in the wind now?"

"Call of ceremony—take us for the port-admiral, like enough," jeered Hager. "Trust a Dago to have all the fuss and feathers going!"

To Skipper Jimmy Rounds of the Baillie Dutton, taking his ease in the inn, appeared a youth, pop-eyed with

excitement, breathless with hard running from the landing.

"They—they got him," he gasped. "He's gone—they're gone! Bar—Barcelona!"

Skipper Jimmy sprang up and clapped a big hand on Manning's shoulder.

"Talk sense and English. Barcelona? Mean that rebel war boat has turned up here? Run in and run out again and carried somebody off—who?"

"S h i e l d s—Bill Shields—shanghaied!"

Skipper Jimmy let out a deep-sea roar and strode to the door, the second officer at his heels. There was no chance for question or answer while they raced to the landing, but as they pulled off to the ship, Manning told his tale.

The boat from the Barcelona had run alongside the Baillie Dutton. A little man, very dark, very suave, speaking English fairly, had come aboard. There was a trifle of trouble in the engine room of the extemporized cruiser, not serious, but annoying to the mechanical staff. Would the distinguished chief of the Baillie Dutton favor his professional conferees by joining them in consultation, so to speak? If so, he would confer a vast favor upon true patriots who would not show themselves ungrateful.

Bill Shields went willingly enough, the little man waving sweeping acknowledgments to Hager and Manning. Presently he followed Shields up the side of the ex-yacht. Whereupon things happened swiftly and surprisingly

The Barcelona's windlass clanked, as she hoisted the anchor so recently dropped; her propeller revolved; her nose swung seaward; on her deck a knot of men fought desperately, and Bill Shields went down, overwhelmed by force of numbers.

In his own way, Hager was no fool. Smoke was pouring from the Baillie Dutton's stack and her mudhook was clear of the bottom when the skipper reached her. Jimmy Rounds was not the man to sit with folded hands when somebody stole his chief engineer—especially when the skipper hoped to marry the chief's pretty sister.

The Baillie Dutton ploughed straight after the fleeing Barcelona. Jimmy summoned McLeod, second engineer, to the bridge and spake crisply. McLeod went back to his own place, and the stack belched forth denser clouds than ever.

For an hour, it seemed a losing chase; then the Barcelona's rate of gain faded. Nominally, she had the heels of the Baillie Dutton by four or five miles an hour, but her bottom was foul and her engines had known but shiftless care. The tramp was rated an eight-knot boat. McLeod had her doing close to ten, and at sundown she was more than holding her own.

Skipper Jimmy studied his charts and took heart. The Barcelona was steering for the only port known to be in possession of the rebels; she'd hold her course through the night. Her game was clear enough. Needing a competent chief engineer, she had recruited one by press-gang process. She was running away from an

unarmed merchantman, not from fear, but because she had a date at home. No doubt, other things being even, she was willing to avoid diplomatic complications such as would follow sinking a ship flying the flag of a maritime power. Hence the silence of those quick-firers of hers.

Hager, too, was thinking it over. Just what did the captain propose to do, supposing he overhauled the Barcelona on the high seas or under the sheltering guns of a shore battery, eh?

"Get Bill Shields back!" growled Skipper Jimmy doggedly.

Hager grinned. He had heard of Jennie Shields—pretty girl, but spirited. He gauged his commander's reasons shrewdly.

The night was fine and clear and they did not lose the Barcelona. Daylight found her barely a mile in the lead. Skipper Jimmy devoted himself to oiling and loading his revolver and a sporting rifle he happened to own. Young Manning got out an ancient shot-gun. Hager set the carpenter to fashioning pikes and cudgels, useful if it should come to hand-to-hand festivities. The temper of the crew was promising, for Shields was well liked. Hager figured it out in his stolid fashion: if there were a boarding job, the thing might be worked—he didn't esteem highly the staying qualities of the rebel outfit. But how about those quick-firers? Bad as the marksmanship might be, how could they avoid sinking the Baillie Dutton before she could get alongside?

Skipper Jimmy kept his own counsel. The questions which puzzled Hager were bothering him, but his determination knew no wakening. One way or another, he'd recover Jennie Shields' brother, but what the way was to be was still beyond his ken. With his goal clearly in mind, he'd cross bridges when he came to them.

By noon, they raised land, dead ahead, and soon they made out the contour of lofty hills. Presently, they made out, too, a steamer to port and well in-shore, and saw that she was aiming to cut them off.

The Barcelona shifted her course a trifle, edging away from the stranger. The Baillie Dutton followed suit.

Skipper Jimmy, ogling the newcomer through his glasses, whistled softly.

"War boat, or I'm jiggered! Presidente, I reckon; she's the ablest of the other crowd's navy. Here'll be the devil to pay, and plenty o' pitch hot!"

Back to the Barcelona, he ranged his binoculars. Men were running about her deck; half a dozen clustered about her gun aft. Her long black neck swung over the side. There was a puff of smoke and a spiteful bark. Half a mile ahead of the stranger, a fountain rose where the shell struck the sea.

"Rotten!" grumbled Skipper Jimmy.

In turn, there was a white puff from the stranger's bow, a bark made faint by distance, another fountain, spouting as near the Baillie Dutton as the Barcelona.

"More of the same!" commented the skipper.

The rebel gun crew blazed away with no better results; the enemy an-

swered as ineffectively; then both seemed to be disposed to save ammunition for closer quarters. Meanwhile, the hostile gunboat was showing more speed than either the ex-yacht or the tramp. Skipper Jimmy, figuring closely, was of the opinion that if all held their courses unchanged, the enemy would pass between original pursuer and pursued.

Hager plucked at his sleeve. "Lord love us, Captain, but what's the game now? Signalling us, or I'm a dogfish!"

"Eh?" said the skipper. A man, leaning far over the end of the Barcelona's bridge, was waving a small flag in spirited imitation of a signalman's movements. "Wig-wagging us, by the Lord Harry! Hang me if I thought the Dons had it in 'em!"

"But—but why—what—what—?"

Skipper Jimmy laughed aloud. "Gallery play—for advertising purposes only and not as an evidence of good faith—playing us for a consort—see? Orders from the flagship—get that, don't you? Moral for the other fellow's benefit, 's plain as the nose on your face; if he can't bag both, he'd better take the one that's easy picking and that's us!"

The gunboat took the hint. Again her gun forward banged and a shell screeched across the Baillie Dutton's bow. Hager swore, and the skipper's face grew grim, as the gunboat, shifting helm, abandoned pursuit of the Barcelona and bore down upon the tramp.

Sure of her prey, the Presidente did not fire again, though the muzzle of her big gun was depressed, as if in readiness to blow the Baillie Dutton out of the water. Captain Jimmy, not sure of anything, took no chances. This was no time for hesitation, for protest, for claiming the protection of the flag he was flying. A shell at his water-line, or surrender and delay perhaps of months, while a dragging prize-court decided the fate of his ship—either outcome equally spelled an end of his hopes of recapturing the brother of pretty Jennie Shields. It was plain that he had come to one of those bridges to cross. If a blow must be dealt, he preferred to inflict rather than receive it.

The gunboat, rounding to a course parallel with the tramp's, had drawn very close. Somebody was bawling to the skipper to surrender or be sunk. Jimmy Rounds shouted sharply to his quartermaster. For a lumpy boat, the Baillie Dutton answered her helm promptly. Her massive bow veered toward the Presidente. The voice ceased bawling at the skipper and shrieked an order an instant too late. There was trouble with the gun; there was no deadly blast from its black muzzle; there was slow work at the wheel. The heavy bow of the Baillie Dutton caught the counter of the other vessel and smashed a great hole in her side. As the ships recoiled from the collision, Skipper Jimmy stopped his engines. The gunboat began to list. Water was pouring in great volumes through her gaping wound.

For humanity's sake, Jimmy waited till he saw that the sinking craft had

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The Passing of Jerry Denton

BY LESLIE G. SHANNON

Here is a startlingly realistic account of the sensations of a man who is facing the immutable law of a "life for a life."

ON the third and topmost gallery of the west wing cell-house, were lodged five wretched humans, all awaiting a final summons from the room with the green door—that ominous entrance always in orbit from each of the five cells. At one time, not so long past, eight of the condemned cells had been occupied, but one by one, three murderers had shuffled along the narrow balcony and disappeared into the fateful room behind the staring door.

To the five remaining, the fading, double-throb of the cell-block electrics, as the current was drawn and diverted into the switches of the execution chamber, was the signal that one more of their number had been snuffed into eternity, that slowly the relentless machine of the law was reaching for them, and with the surety of doom, would grasp and grind them to atoms in its terrible maw.

In the first of those third-gallery cells, Jerry Denton was locked. He had heard the uncertain footsteps of the three who had gone before creak past the drawn curtain blinding the cell-front. He had watched, with quivering nostrils and down-drawn brows, the sudden dimming of the incandescent in the upper corner of his cell, as each body had tautened and pulsated in its bonds behind the swift rush of the snapping current.

Now his hour had nearly turned, and before him, folded neatly on a stool-top, was the rough suit of black drill, with its miscellaneous cuts and sewings, looking for the insertion of sundry dampened sponges and metals when he should be cornered like a rat in a trap and bound between the two arms of the death-chair.

He sat on the edge of his bunk and peered inertly through the cell grating, the muscles of his heavy face bunching themselves into thick ridges beneath the intensity of the futile tearing and raging inside his brain. In that crouch, he resembled some ferocious beast of prey brought to bay in a blind, inescapable retreat.

His narrow, mottled forehead was corrugated, and the scalp-line of the closely-clipped head, dropping low at the center, accentuated the strong, muscular curve of the wide jaw, the small, piggish eyes, and the battered nose. His shoulders were square and weighty, and spread their great breadth to either side of the thick neck in sinewy rolls of brawn.

For eight months, Denton had been an inmate of a cell on the death tier. By merest chance, ill-luck, in the guise of an over-enthusiastic "harness bull," had fallen upon him immedi-

ately following the momentary "lifting" of a weather-beaten overcoat from a pawn-shop dummy. He had been hustled into Headquarters, and the Bureau of Investigation, where Bertillon experts had speedily proven their scientific worth by cleverly matching up the whorls on his blunted finger-tips with certain others very unwisely left behind him on a banister railing after the "frisking" of an apartment in the upper town, and the brutal but inadvertent "croaking" of its occupant.

His later indictment and trial in the criminal court had been short and uneventful from the reporter's standpoint, and now, at last, the hour had arrived when the greatest thing on his mental horizon was the black shadow of the electric chair, with all its innocent-appearing and complicated appurtenances.

Outside his cell-door, the electrics hanging from the upper iron-work of the "house," had already sprung into brightness. Along the balcony, wooden stools and iron buckets clashed into corners, as bunks were opened for the night. From the gallery below, he could hear the creaking tread of a keeper making his regular hourly patrol.

His closely-set eyes diverted their gaze to the funeral clothes on the stool-top. Suddenly, a wave of icy air seemed to pass above his clipped skull, and with gaping mouth, he watched each garment slowly arise and assume form, suspended midway between stone floor and ceiling. He cowered back in terrible fear, forcing his great unwieldly body to the far corner of the bunk. In the abandon of a witch's dance, the ghostly, sinister phantom enveloped in the death-suit, fluttered and waved and swung before him!

All the familiar clamor of the cell-house seemed to have disappeared. In the extremity of his horrible fear, Denton struggled to force a cry from his parched throat. Then came a sudden, puzzling snap inside his brain! He closed his eyes beneath the stinging shock. A momentary blackness overwhelmed him, and when he had rolled into a sitting posture and banished the cobwebbing daze, he saw the black clothing in its place on the stool-top, seemed to distinguish about him the accustomed noises of the cell corridor!

He rubbed his eyes with big knotted fists, rose to uncertain feet and staggered to the cell-front. There he clasped and shook the heavy grating in a passion of wild despair, until he could hear the approaching footsteps of the night keeper. Then, like a flash, there crept over his muscular bulk, a shade of cat-like stealth, a subtle, menacing wave of hate, a beast-like determination to destroy! He peered intently towards the spot where the guard would first appear and with an effort, masked his coarse face with an unnatural leer of respect.

Such an expression, usually so foreign to his scarred visage, immediately attracted the attention of the passing keeper, who halted on the outer edge of the balcony and attempted to gaze past the bulky figure of the convict into the cell's interior. Denton's pig-like eyes had already noted the heavy key suspended from the guard's right

wrist and, with a feint of sudden confidence, he beckoned the man to step closer to the barred doorway.

The keeper immediately complied. Then the convict, snarling with hate, thrust his great hands between the uprights in the cell-grating and clutched the bare, unprotected throat of his unsuspecting victim with a tearing, squeezing grasp!

A sharp, quick snap, detached the heavy key from the man's wrist; another, crashed it down with stunning force on his skull! There was a sucking gasp, a faint, sobbing moan, and the body of the guard, released from the murderous hold, fell soddenly to the floor.

With furtive, animal-like movements, the giant convict inserted the key into the great lock, "wristed" it slowly and carefully, using extraordinary stealth in the doing, so as not to arouse the other occupants of the condemned tier. Then, discarding the faded prison suit piece by piece, he dressed himself in the clothing that had lain upon the stool-top, swung ajar the heavy grating, and stepping over the inert body of the death watch, passed out to the gallery.

He peered down into the deep open space before the cell-block. A small electric illuminated the surface of the keeper's desk in the far end of the corridor. The only sounds that punctured the deep silence were the sleeping noises of restless men.

Denton sidled along the balcony, slinking closely to its inner edge. He reached the curving iron stairway, leading down flight by flight to the main cell-house floor. He traversed safely its worn, glossy surface, and at last reached its foot. Crouching, skulking, slinking, his enormous body bent nearly double, he made his way to the threshold of the barred entry leading into the warden-house. On the door-casing to his left was the circular form surrounding a bell-push. He pressed the button and then clung tightly, closely, to the wall at the right.

There was a moment's silence. Then came the hurried tread of a keeper, and the massive oaken door inside was thrown open. A short interval of quiet ensued, during which the warden-house guard peered into the darkened corridor of the cell-house. Then came the stutter of a key as it was thrust into the lock of the outer grating.

Denton now drew himself back, and with a tigerish reflex of his knotted muscles, prepared to leap upon his unconscious prey. Slowly the barred gateway swung upon its hinges and the keeper warily entered into the shadows of the cell-block. He halted just inside and glanced uncertainly about him, his eyes unaccustomed to the faint light. Then it was that the convict sprang, the blood-lust mantling his eyes!

Crushed and lacerated, breath hissing from between blackening lips, his victim was hurtled down upon the stone flaggings of the damp floor, where huge bulging fists mercilessly beat him into insensibility.

Leaping to his feet, the convict now turned and dashed into the main foyer of the warden-house. A keeper dozed behind a flat-top desk just within the vaulted entrance to the prison. Like a whirlwind of fury, Denton de-

scended upon him, and in the wink of an eye, the key to the last outer barrier was in his possession. He stumbled headlong to the great door, and as he pushed the key into the lock, he heard the shuffle of many feet in the guard hall above. Snapping the tumblers in furious haste, he threw himself into the opening exit, toppled down a short stretch of steps, hurdled a narrow hedge and picket fence, and then found himself in the blind maze of a railroad yard.

Immediately before him, a heavy freight was slowly gathering speed. It was headed northward, where lay the one spot in the world where the fugitive felt he might seek refuge—the Big Town. Behind him, the great prison siren was alarming the countryside with its screeching wails, and he knew that if he lingered in the immediate vicinity of the penitentiary, bloodhounds would soon be on his trail.

Buttoning the ill-fitting black coat close up about his throat, he sidled into the cold, roaring breath of the train's insuck, stood for a fleeting moment in the whirling rain of small pebbles and flying dust, and then, watching his opportunity, darted headlong at the side-rod as it hurled itself past him. His hands grasped the rust-bitten metal, his legs dragged helplessly for a moment, flinging up a shower of stone ballast from the roadbed; then, with a superhuman tug of his muscular limbs, he drew himself up slowly, slowly, until he could bring his body into a horizontal position between a pair of suspended rods.

There he lay, while the train roared on, through gully and prairie and forestland. At intervals it halted at sleepy way stations, and then Denton would pull himself out of his uncertain perch, and disappear into nearby shadows. Soon flickering lanterns would swing and skip like fireflies, as trucks were overhauled and wheels oil-packed. Then once more would come the grinding squeal of the releasing air-brakes, and Denton would again crawl up into his retreat between the side-rods.

At last, the hollow roar of elevated crossings began to punctuate the monotonous clickety-click-clickety-click of the reeling trucks, and shortly thereafter, the train cut its pace to the lawful speed stipulated by ordinance within city limits. As soon as he could safely drop from the trucks now, the fugitive loosened his hold, and clammy with dust and grease, darted over the side of the embankment, down into the quiet reach of a suburban street, where infrequent arc lamps stretched away into the murky distance.

With inbred caution, Denton hurriedly skulked through the dense shades of a vacant lot cluttered with the refuse of a city, entered a narrow alley, and then trudged furtively northward. Hatless, disheveled, filthy with the oily grime of his journey beneath the freight, he knew that the veriest "flat-foot" in the Department would nab him on sight as a suspicious person. Therefore, the inbred wisdom of the Underland immediately headed his course for that district of pawnshops and "yegg" rendezvous, where he would be certain to find a haven in which to hide for a time, at least until the first hue and cry

of his escape had blown over.

For two hours he plodded tirelessly on, slinking across brightly lighted thoroughfares, dodging curious pedestrians, until at last the dim gleams of a friendly rumshop flickered before him as he emerged from his alley. Hugging the shadows closely, he stole quickly to a rear entrance, threw open the door, and then closed it easily behind him. As his eyes became aware of the interior of the room which he had entered, they bulged in surprise and affright; a hoarse gasp involuntarily left his dry lips. Before him, seated at a round table, with glasses of beer before them, were Ryan and Russell, a team of Central Office detectives! Even as he recognized them, two automatics covered him, and, true to impulse, his hands were thrown above his head!

"We've got you 'right' this time, my boy!" gloated Russell, as he "frisked" his prisoner and then snapped on the handcuffs. "The captain wants to see ya real bad! Better come along quietly with Tommy and me! Thought you was a wise guy, didn't ya, but Tommy and me, we says to ourselves soon as th' wire comes down from the Big Mill tellin' that you'd beat it, that you'd make for this dump first thing if you made the burg, and we're th' boys that grabbed ya, weren't we, Tommy? Come along, Jerry!"

Stumbling aimlessly between his two captors, Denton was led to the post on the corner. Russell opened the patrol box and called for the wagon. Suddenly, Denton gasped and threw his hands to his forehead. Again there came the blinding crash inside his brain, the same stunning pain that had enveloped him once before when, with gaping mouth, he had watched the shivering phantom rise from the stool-top in the death-cell!

A bright, glowing spark had seemed to escape from one of the trolley wires just above his head, and serpentwise it held his gaze. There it hung, sputtering, hissing, melting, its burning end dripping molten fire. He tried to pull himself away from the zone of danger, but felt the clutching, relentless grip of the handcuffs on his wrists, the impending hold of the two detectives on his arms. He struggled to protect his eyes, wondered why Ryan and Russell did not seek to escape from the threat of the dangling wire with its glowing coil! He sought to move his feet but they were held in a grip of steel; a cramp strained and tore along the rolling muscles of his thighs!

All the time, his eyes were riveted on the spark above him. He saw that it was dropping lower, lower, until his eyeballs seemed bursting with the strain of its terrible light. All sights and sounds about him had sunken to nothingness. In his brain was only the maddening spectacle of that ever-approaching spark!

Then suddenly, there was a sputtering hiss, a roar, a stifling smell of burning flesh, a smothering pain in his forehead, and ripping, burning, searing, blistering, the wire seemed to tear itself in twain and hurl itself upon him, dashing him down into a frenzy of oblivion!

In the execution chamber behind

the green door, three physicians worked silently over the limp body of Jerry Denton, murderer, now hanging lifeless in the leather bonds of the electric chair.

"My God, that man had a wonderful constitution!" exclaimed the elder of the three, shutting his case with a snap. "Can you imagine the resistance generated in a human body which will fortify it to withstand three voltages, one of which ordinarily is sufficient to accomplish the result desired?"

"The whole case is an exceedingly interesting one," commented one of his colleagues. "The man seemed to be in a sort of coma from the time he left the death gallery until he received the electric current. I understand from the warden that it required three keepers to pull him out of his cell. Life seems to cling pretty strongly to a body such as his!"

An Aerial Switch-back

BY HOWARD DWIGHT SMILEY

A crowd of greasers go up against a quick-thinking Irishman and a nervy Texas ranger—there's a thrilling ride for life thro' the air and someone gets licked—no, it wasn't the Irishman.

"HAVEN'T the proverbial one chance in a million," mused Harry Hill, as he stood alone on the south brink of the arroyo that divided the camp of the Aranzazu Copper Company.

A man was descending the opposite declivity, making his way laboriously over the rocky trail, the stones of which were worn smooth by a century of wear by sandalled feet of Mexican peons.

It was barely two hundred yards across the arroyo on the level, but by the time one had scrambled down to the bottom of the cleft and up the opposite wall, he had consumed a good half hour of time, and he would be puffing like a wind-broken horse. The town of Aranzazu is situated high in the mountains, nine thousand feet above the sea level, and the air is very rarefied.

Harry had recognized the man as his friend, Mike Kelly, the boss of the diamond drill gang, and was waiting for him, knowing that he would ascend the southern declivity at that point.

The mining camp, usually humming with activity at this hour of the day, seemed almost deserted. The machinery was silent and the thousand or more workmen, who should have been in evidence everywhere, were conspicuous by their absence. The few men in sight were, for the most part, Mexicans, who loitered in the shade or chatted together in small groups. It was significant that each of them was armed with a rifle and heavy cartridge belt.

Mike Kelly arrived at the top of the arroyo, puffing stentoriously from his exertions. He greeted Harry with astonishment.

"I thought they had you in the cooler!" he exclaimed.

"They let me out half an hour ago," answered Harry quietly. "I guess I am one of the elect," he added with a nervous laugh.

"What! You don't mean—" Mike did not finish the sentence, but stared blankly at his friend, who nodded gloomily.

"The fugitive prisoner law," he said in a low tone. "I have until sundown."

"Till sundown! What are you loafing around here for then? Why don't you make a break?"

Harry laughed bitterly. "To where?" he asked. "I'm caught like a rat in a trap, can't you see? Both the Concepcion trails are guarded by the rebels. It is useless to go toward Mazapil, for that way is blocked, too, and if I did succeed in getting over

the mountains, they could easily catch me on the plain, for it is as bare as a billiard table. Look!"

Harry turned slowly, and following his line of vision, Mike saw a Mexican sitting on the steps of the old store building, fifty yards away. The man had a rifle across his knees, and seemed to be peering warily at them from under a battered old sombrero.

"That is José Martinez," said Harry quietly. "He has been working under me in the San Antonio mine for two years, and always professed to be my friend. I helped him along to a better job. He went out with me when I led the men against the rebels, Monday. After they had licked us, he was glad enough to go over and enlist with the enemy, like the rest of his cowardly brothers, and now he stands ready to shoot me down like a dog the minute I try to get away. There's Felipe, over by the donkey engine. He's another."

Mike looked down at his feet gloomily. He kicked a stone over the edge of the arroyo and watched it rattle to the bottom before speaking.

"It looks dubious," he said, shaking his head. "What made you mix up in this fool affair, anyhow? Why didn't you stick with the rest of us? We're not being molested."

"I was trying to save the mine," answered Harry. "I supposed that of course the company would stand with the Federals, seeing that this property is a government grant."

"You didn't have to do it," grumbled Mike. "It ain't your diggings."

"I suppose I was too impetuous," admitted Harry. "I was down in the mine when José came running in with the information that the rebels were coming. I got my men together quick and hurried them outside, armed with pickaxes and shovels and any old thing they could find. The first thing we saw was a bunch of rebels coming at the head of the old Spanish trail, and I tried to rout them, knowing they must be winded by the climb, but at the first shot my men broke and ran, not having any firearms to speak of, and the next I knew, they had me roped down and in jail. It seems now, that they didn't meet with any other resistance in taking the town."

"No," said Mike. "The drill gang were all on the surface and saw the mix-up. You were on the other side of the arroyo and of course we couldn't get to you in time to offer any assistance. We decided right there and then to remain neutral and let the company take care of its own mines. There are too many jobs in my trade waiting for men, for me to go fooling around with a greaser insurrection. Grant, the general superintendent, sided right in with the rebels as soon as he saw how things were going. He has turned the whole town over to the Insurrectionists and is entertaining the rebel general at his house. They say he has a grand 'stand-in' with the old cuss, but of course, you know, he is doing this to save the mines. The rebels would break everything if they once got started."

"I wish I had kept out of it," said Harry bitterly.

"What on earth are you going to do?" asked Mike hopelessly.

"Do! What can I do except stand around here until I am shot down like a dog?"

Mike Kelly clenched his hairy fists angrily.

"The dirty dogs!" he hissed through his teeth. "Blame it all, Harry, we can't let you go out like this! We gringos have got to stick together! We've got to figure out some way to save you! I'll see Grant."

"Grant!" laughed Harry sarcastically. "He can't do anything! He's trying to save the mines, and you know as well as I, that he'll stand by his employers at any cost!"

"I'll see him, anyhow," reiterated Mike stubbornly. "He isn't going to let a fellow countryman be shot up by a lot of greasers just for the sake of a soulless corporation, if I know it! You stick around where I can get you quick, and I'll see the boys."

Mike left his friend and climbed up the bluff to the drill shop, while Harry turned despondently away and walked slowly up the narrow-gauge tram tracks to the San Antonio mine, which was one of the group owned by the Aranzazu Copper Company, and where he had held the position of mine boss for three years.

He gazed gloomily into the deserted tunnel, but dared not enter, for this move might be interpreted as an attempt to escape, by the dozen or more pairs of eyes he knew were watching for just such a move on his part, in order that they might consummate the murder for which they had been detailed.

The fugitive law had him in its toils. This law, which was enacted by the old government, some time before the present insurrection, applied principally to political prisoners, and consisted of leading the unhappy victim to the jail door and liberating him, with the stipulation that unless he made good his escape within a certain number of hours he would be shot down. The prisoner was allowed to go, but from the moment he left the jail door until he fell with from one to a dozen bullets in his back, he was under the surveillance of armed representatives of the law, who saw to it that he never escaped alive.

Harry Hill slowly retraced his steps along the tram track. He knew that his hour was near. They had given him until sundown and now the sun hung just above the ridge of Mount Alto. In less than ten minutes it would sink from sight, and then his Mexican executioners would vie with each other for the first shot at his defenseless back.

As he neared the drill shop he glanced inquiringly in that direction, and wondered if Mike had succeeded in formulating some scheme to save him from his impending doom. The shop seemed deserted and Harry was about to pass by when a low whistle attracted his attention.

He paused and looked about wonderingly. The whistle was not repeated, but instinctively he felt that it had been meant for him and continued looking about. Finally, happening to turn in the direction of the cable house, he saw the face of his friend, Mike Kelly, peering out through the half open door and beckoning frantically.

Harry realized instantly that something was in the wind and looked

about cautiously to see if the coast were clear. Some fifty yards behind him walked José Martinez, his rifle slung carelessly under his arm and his eyes peering alertly out from under the rim of his sombrero.

Harry measured the distance with his eye. In order to reach the cable house it would be necessary for him to drop over the ledge on which he stood, to some tracks ten feet below, in the cable yard. From there, it was about fifty feet to the door where Mike awaited him.

He sat down on the ledge and looked about carelessly, as if he were merely resting. Immediately his guard stopped, and after watching Harry suspiciously for a minute, he also, sat down on a small pile of ore on the opposite side of the tracks.

But one half of the sun was now visible above Mount Alto. Harry realized that he must act quickly. Without a glance in the direction of the Mexican, he dropped to the tracks below and sprang across the space that separated him from the cable house.

A shout told him he had aroused the suspicions of the watchful José, and just as he reached the door, a rifle cracked and a bullet buzzed angrily by his head. An instant later, Mike had jerked him inside and was slinging a heavy iron bar across the solidly built door.

"Quick!" he shouted, as he sprang to the lever that released the drum on which the cable traveled. "Jump into that bucket!"

"What are you trying to do, man?" gasped Harry. "You'll be—"

"Never mind me!" interrupted Mike angrily. "I'm in this as much as you are now! Get into that bucket quick, before they head us off."

The report of the rifle had attracted the other rebels, as the fugitives could tell by the shouts from the outside. After a second's hesitation, Harry turned resolutely to the door and laid his hand on the bar.

"I am not going to get you into any such fix as this, Mike," he declared stoutly. "I'll go out and be shot if necessary, but they shan't kill you." The cable drum was beginning to revolve rapidly, and with an angry exclamation, Mike sprang across the room, and seizing his smaller companion about the waist, he carried him to the bucket and threw him in. Quickly he ran the bucket off the side track on to the cable, and then scrambled in, crushing Harry to the bottom and holding him there.

The rebels were battering against the door, and Mike smiled grimly as he thought of how he had carefully removed all timbers and other implements that might be used as rams, to the inside of the cable house not ten minutes before. He felt confident that the Mexicans would not be able to get through the heavy door until after he and Harry were well on their way.

The steel bucket occupied by the fugitives was one of the several hundred used by the Aranzazu Copper Company to convey ore from the mines to the smelter at Concepcion del Oro, at the foot of the mountains, five miles away.

The bucket was suspended by a curved hanger to the cable, which ran by gravity. The incline was such that one loaded bucket, going down, would

pull up two empty buckets. These buckets were placed at intervals of fifty feet along the cable and the hangers were so arranged as to automatically switch the buckets off on stationary tracks at the two terminals.

The operation of the line was simple, the cable merely revolving around huge wooden drums at each station, which could be instantly stopped or started by merely applying or releasing the brakes attached to the drums. Gravity did the rest. Therefore, once started, it was impossible for the rebels to bring the bucket back to the starting point until after it had passed the lower station.

The cable had been in operation up to the time the Insurrectos had invaded Aranzazu and, therefore, there were a number of loaded buckets on the cable ahead of the men, which would keep the line running until after it had passed the lower station.

For perhaps a hundred yards the bucket traveled under a closed shed, and where it emerged it would be some twenty feet above the ground. Mike knew, however, that any soldiers standing on the abutments at the exit could easily shoot down into the bucket, and he cautioned Harry to crouch as low as possible and remain quiet.

As they shot out into the twilight, Mike looked up apprehensively. The abutments were deserted. The rebels were probably concentrated at the door of the cable house endeavoring to break it down, if, indeed, they had not already succeeded.

He straightened up with a sigh of relief and made room for his companion to rise up beside him. Their positions were cramped, as the bucket was only three feet in diameter and a little over four feet deep.

"Now you have done it!" exclaimed Harry ruefully, as he looked over the side of the swinging bucket. "You've killed us both!"

"We're a long ways from dead yet," grinned Mike. We're on our way and they can't back us up or shoot us unless they can fly."

"We can only go to Concepcion!" stormed Harry angrily. "That town is also in the hands of the Insurrectos, and all those greasers back there will have to do is to 'phone down and have us intercepted!"

"I know it," admitted Mike cheerfully. "But I had to do something, didn't I? The other boys refused to mix up in this affair; I 'phoned over to Grant and he said he could not interfere as he had already had trouble enough getting inside the confidence of the rebel general, and didn't propose taking any chances by making unreasonable requests at this time. That put it up to me and I figured out this ruse and am doing my best to save you, and the only thanks I am getting is a cussing!" Mike put this last in an aggrieved tone.

"Oh, I appreciate your good intentions," said Harry half apologetically. "What I am raving about is that you've gotten yourself into such a fix. My fate was already settled and I would have been dead by now if you hadn't interfered, but that didn't make it necessary for you to die, too—hello! what's that?"

The cable jerked suddenly, and an instant later came to a dead stop.

"They've broken into the cable

house and applied the brake," grinned Mike. "Now, if they have a slack wire walker in the bunch, he can run out here and shoot us. I don't know what else they can do."

"You seem mighty cool about this situation!" exclaimed Harry, exasperated. "Have you any idea how we are going to get out of this fix?"

"Not the remotest," answered Mike, still grinning. "I've just started things and now we'll see where they end up."

Harry peered over the side of the bucket. They were swinging in space over a rocky cleft in the mountains, fully five hundred feet above ground. The bucket had covered a distance of over a mile since they had started and was now well on its way toward Concepcion del Oro.

There were three ways to reach Concepcion from Aranzaza. One was by the cable, another, by the old trail, built by the Spaniards several centuries ago and now but little used because of its dangerous condition, and the third, by the new trail, built by the mining company.

It was now impossible to approach the fugitives by the cable. The nearest point to which either trail approached them was over a mile distant, and the intervening space was impassible except by long and arduous climbing on foot. Even if their pursuers did succeed in reaching a point below them, the heavy steel bucket would be ample protection against their bullets.

Still, they could not remain suspended in mid-air forever. For nearly half an hour, they remained motionless, anxiously watching in every direction for evidence of pursuit. Harry was beginning to wonder what the ultimate outcome would be, when the cable started again.

"Here we go!" shouted Mike gleefully. "These greasers have finally figured it out, just as I expected they would! They've 'phoned down to Concepcion to have us intercepted, and now we're on our way!"

"But we'll be carried right into their arms!" expostulated Harry. "We are more at their mercy than ever!"

"They'll be looking for us all right," chuckled Mike, "but I've got one more trick up my sleeve that they haven't reckoned on."

"What's that?" asked Harry in astonishment.

"We'll go back to Aranzazu," answered Mike.

"Go back! How? We can't fly, man!"

"Just wait a minute and I'll show you," grinned Mike.

At irregular intervals along the cable line, were erected skeleton steel towers, varying in height from twenty to one hundred feet. These were placed as supports and guides for the cable, wherever the latter approached the uneven surface of the mountain close enough to connect with them.

Mike pointed ahead to one of these towers, about fifty feet distant. "When we come under the arm of that tower, you grab it and swing loose and get into the skeleton work," he instructed Harry. "I'll try and make it with you, but if I don't I'll get off at the next tower and come back."

Harry grasped his intentions instantly and stood up in the bucket in

readiness to seize hold of the arm that projected out from the tower as a support and guide for the cable.

The men were lucky, for both succeeded in grasping the arm as they swung by, and a second later they were swinging in mid-air, while the empty bucket shot on without them. Hand over hand, they made their way to the tower, and a minute later they were astride the arm which guided the returning cable on the opposite side.

In a few seconds, an empty bucket came along, and by seizing hold on the cable above it, the two men succeeded in swinging themselves into it. Not without considerable risk, however, for the bucket swayed and rocked and threatened to capsize until they had squatted down in the bottom.

"There!" said Mike, with a grunt of satisfaction. "We're playing tag with those greasers in a manner they least expect! Now, if they've done what a Mexican naturally will do, they are right now burning up the trail to Concepcion in an effort to get there in time for the killing. Keep your head down and don't let any one see us, and if the cable house is empty we'll be—"

"Right where we started!" interrupted Harry grouchily. "Only now you are in it as well as I. Why didn't you keep out of it, you white Irishman?"

"Because I'm trying to save your hide, you unappreciative Texas ranger!" retorted Mike genially. "Now shut up and lie low; we're getting near home."

The return trip was accomplished inside of ten minutes, and as the bucket entered the long shed that preceded the cable house, the fugitives rose apprehensively to their feet and peered anxiously ahead. The drum room was empty. As Mike had anticipated, Harry's death watch was probably hurrying down the trail to Concepcion in the hope of arriving there in time to participate in the pleasure of killing a gringo.

The two men sprang from the bucket as it rounded the curve to approach the drum, and looked about.

The battered door hung by one hinge. It was evident that the heavy iron bar had held well. Mike noted that the rebels had used a heavy stull timber as a battering ram and knew that they had to carry this from a point a hundred yards away, thus delaying the stopping of the cable for some time.

He peered cautiously out through the open door. It was now quite dark, and as he expected, there was not an Insurrecto in sight.

"They've all gone down to our funeral," chuckled Harry in an undertone. "Now come on. We'll go up the tram track past your old mine, and from there we'll hit the Santa Rosa trail over the south range, switch on to the Mazapil down to the plain and intercept the railroad this side of Concepcion."

He slid out the door closely followed by Harry, crossed the cable yards, and a moment later, they pulled themselves up on the upper tracks and were hurrying away in the darkness.

About midnight, a train consisting of an engine and one coach, formerly the private car of the general manager

of the Aranzazu Copper Company, but now confiscated by the rebels and probably full of Insurrectos, stopped at one of the little stations along the route between Concepcion del Oro and Saltillo, to take water.

Just before it pulled out again, two bedraggled figures dodged out from behind a clump of mesquite bushes and crawled under the coach and onto the trucks, where they stretched out, clinging to the brakebeam.

Three hours later, when the train pulled into the yards at Saltillo, these same men crawled from under the car, very black, dusty and tired, and dodging through the yards to escape detection, hurried by a roundabout route to the Hotel Romo, where they were greeted with exclamations of amazement by several of their countrymen.

"We had a telephone that you were shot last night in Concepcion!" exclaimed one.

"Not us," grinned Mike Kelly. "Any old time a bunch of greasers can outwit an Irish-American diamond drill operator and a Texas Ranger, they're going some!"

Mother

BY HORATIO WINSLOW

Have you ever read Kipling's wonderful poem "Mother O' Mine"? Yes? Then read this story. If you have not, look it up after you have read this story.

PURE chance brought Martin Cothran's feet to the ruts of the old Tyre Road. Trout fishing up Dawson Hollow, he had lost his way and stumbled by devious trails down the other side of the divide. Now it was too late and too dark to beat it back to the boarding house. He was on the point of striking for the nearest dwelling when a stir of bushes caught his ear. Across the road, somebody was emerging from a thicket without the aid of a press agent. The nose slanted familiarly, and ear and hair met at an expected angle. Suddenly Cothran forgot that he was on a vacation, to remember the snapshot taken after a certain arrest—before the prisoner's sensational escape.

"That's the guy," he whispered to himself. "The fella that croaked Pig Ryan and made a getaway."

Noiselessly he crept along behind till he was near enough to drop a hand on the fugitive's shoulder.

"Say, Kid," he said, "you certainly did for Pig Ryan, all right, all right."

The boy turned a despairing face to the detective. "I knew they'd catch me sometime," he said hoarsely, "but I—I wanted to see my mother first."

"Can that mother stuff," roared Cothran with sudden indignation. "Nobody done nothing yet that didn't pull some guff about 'dear old mother.' Cut out all the bull!" which was the way Cothran announced to the world that he was a deep-dyed sentimentalist and ashamed of it.

The boy's look was desperate. "I'm telling you the truth. My mother lives there—where you see the light—and I'm the only one she has left. If she ever knew I'd—I'd attacked anybody or was in jail for murder—well, it would kill her."

"Whatcha going to do about it?" The detective was waxing cynical. "Don't these hicks ever read a newspaper?"

"I lived in Newark; the New York police never found out my name. And I was going to tell her that I was leaving for South America. You see, if she ever found out what I'd done—"

The boy began to choke while Cothran covered up his personal emotions by growing furiously angry. "Whatsa matter? Swallowed the cork? Stop gagging. I ain't going to crab your act with your mother. Only don't think you're going to get a chance to spring anything new on me, because you ain't. But if you act decent—"

The fugitive became almost happy. "You're the finest man that ever came from New York," he gulped.

These words touched a certain sentimental chord in the detective's nature. "Shut up," he countered fiercely. "You're nothin' but a bum and I got you dead to rights, and don't forget it. Shut up!"

They were at the gate now. The dog that barked behind the fence quieted at the boy's voice. Then the door opened, letting a stream of yellow lamplight wave out upon the grass. There, framed in the doorway, stood Mother.

There was no doubt as to her identity. True she was not much like Cothran's own mother, who had ended her troublous life after carrying him through typhoid, but she was Mother all the same. She was the same frail wisp of a woman that he had seen welcoming prodigal sons on the stage and in movies and illustrated songs. She was the incarnation of the word "mother"—delicate, trustful, loving—so ethereal that a good strong wind would blow her away. A gush of filial sentiment welled up in Cothran. She should never know the truth if *he* could help it—never. But he corrected this unmanly emotion by squeezing the boy's shoulder viciously as he said, "You tell your mother I'm Cothran, Martin Cothran, and don't try to play me for a simp, or I'll bore you, understand?"

The boy shook himself free from the detective's fingers to spring up the four steps crying, "Mother! Mother!"

Within two minutes, the detective had been introduced, vaguely explained, and given the liberty of the supper table. The first rush of welcome over, Mother surveyed the pair and then shook her head timidly.

"Ed, it seems like you're hiding something from me."

"No, I ain't, am I, Martin? I got two days off and came up here because Martin was up here fishing and I wanted to see if you're as well as you say you are in your letters."

"My sleepin' ain't been so good lately. I had the new doctor from Tyre twice. But I'm making out." Mother's face grew worried again. "Ed, are you telling me the truth? You're the only one I got left, and if anything was to happen to you," she put her right hand to her mouth and drew back as though shrinking from a blow, "I don't know what I'd do."

"Mother," he stopped and turned his gaze down on the carpet, "Mother, Martin and me—we're going to South America."

"*South America!* What for?" There was terror in her voice.

"Oh, big chances there." The boy nodded gravely, as though he had made a life-long study of the continent. "Big chances. With that five hundred of mine and Martin's thousand we can make it go."

To Cothran it seemed that her eyes searched down into the little ugly corners of his soul. It was the way his mother had looked at him. He wished he could throw up his job on the spot and—but that was out of the question.

"What are you going to do down there?"

Ed was stammering and Cothran rushed blindly to the rescue. "We're going to raise *guachos*—big money in that."

"What are *guachos*?"

"Well," Cothran spread his hands judicially. "A *guacho* 's about *so* big. Something like a pineapple. Grows on trees."

"How long you going to be gone?"

"How long?" Ed had regained his self-control. "Oh, I dunno. Couple of years, prob'ly. But maybe after twelve months or so, you could come down and visit us. Huh, Martin?"

"You bet." The detective swallowed a growing lump. He also swore to himself that never again if he could help it, would he butt into a case where white-haired mothers held the center of the stage. In fact, he almost reached a point where in the present instance he would—but Common Sense interrupted with its "Aw, now, be reasonable!" His trade was catching men, not letting 'em go. Anyhow, he'd keep Mother from ever getting "hep" to what happened to the kid.

But there is something about singing that breaks you all up inside, just as if a steam roller had gone down your gullet. Mother sat at the organ and played while all three sang.

By the time Mother kissed Ed, and led the two to the bedroom where they were to sleep, the lump in Cothran's throat had grown as big as a barrel. The door closed and then and there the detective began to do the most unprofessional thing. He started to explain to Ed the method which he should use in getting away and eluding any other pursuer. Martin Cothran had surrendered to Mother—foot, horse and artillery.

"Listen here—" he began. And then Ed, totally unaware of what was coming, spoiled it before it was under way.

Ed's punch was not a good punch, because the boy did not know how to use his fists. It was badly aimed and poorly propelled, but it grazed Cothran's chin and in one half second changed him back again to the hard stuff. No more mush.

"You listen," he hissed. "A minute ago I was going to turn you loose and pertend I'd never seen you. Now—nothing doing."

The boy's face was streaky with tears. "Why don't you go ahead? You know I ain't any regular murderer. You know who Pig Ryan was. I found out myself—afterwards. Here was this money that I'd saved to put in a business and he got me drunk and took it away from me and when I asked half of it back—just half—he called his men to throw me out and well—I hit him with a chair like they said."

Cothran's face was a grim study. "I don't care what you did or what you didn't do. I've got you and I'm going to keep my hooks on you. What's more, I ain't going to risk getting the wabbles by seeing your mother again. There's a roof under this window. You leave a note explaining we got to catch a train and we'll skip before daylight. After this you won't get ten inches away from me. And if you try any funny wheezes, you'll get a wad of knuckles in your mush—believe me!"

The boy was sobbing silently on the bed as the boards of the hall floor creaked.

"Hello!" Cothran opened the door a crack.

"It's only Mother," said the faded voice. "Ed, I've brought you some of

your fav'rite doughnuts; and Mr. Cothran, I thought mebbe you'd relish this glass of nice fresh milk. Do you like milk?"

"You bet," said Cothran, as he took in the tray.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, he gulped down the milk and ate a doughnut. Then he stretched out beside his charge.

"Might as well be comfortable till we start," he said. "Only don't git funny." Then he added philosophically and altogether to himself, "Ain't it hell now, the things a fella has to do to earn a living? Ain't it hell?"

A noonday sun was beating on the rag carpet when Cothran opened his astounded eyes. Gently, but insistently, somebody was rap-tapping at the door. As he rose on one elbow to look about him, a fresh shock sent him bounding from the bed. Not only was it broad daylight, but Ed was gone. With a force that set the hinges creaking, he swung the door open, only to face Mother—fragile, black garbed, smiling.

"Now, Mr. Cothran," she said soothingly, "there ain't no use taking on. Two wrongs never made one right, and after hearing Ed's story, I made up my mind it wouldn't help nobody to have Ed put in prison for a thing like that. So I just gave him all the money I had and sent him packing. And I think—"

"You look here," thundered the big detective. "I want to know quick and plain what happened to me. Huh? What happened to me?"

"Now, Martin," she was very calm and motherly, "you mustn't get excited. I knew something was wrong from the minute you talked about raising *guachos*—a *guacho* is a cowboy. I remember my geography if you don't. So I had a long talk with Ed—"

"But—" spluttered the chagrined detective.

"Of course, Martin, it wasn't exactly the right thing to do, but there didn't seem to be any other way so I put into your glass of milk one of the powders that the doctor's been giving me for sleeping."

Cothran gaped in amazement. "Huh? What's that? You! And do you know what Ed done? Did he tell you everything?"

The little woman smiled apologetically. "Of course he did. I felt pretty bad at first, but a mother learns to stand a lot of things. Ed always said I was a good mother and if I wasn't able to take care of my boy when he needed me, I wouldn't be much of a mother, would I?"

The detective sank down wearily on the bed, though his face, strange to say, wore a look of relief.

"Well," he said at last, "I guess I got to hand it to you—Mother."

The Declaration of Independence at Sunny Mount

BY ROGER FISON

Two "lightning slingers," isolated in a box car telegraph office, moved by the patriotic inspiration of the Fourth of July (and some that comes in bottles) leave the employ of their Company but not the confines of their office.

OFFICIALS of the mountain division of the S. U. Railroad had a strange habit of creating, suddenly abolishing, then re-creating telegraph stations along its two hundred miles of sky-piercing standard gauge rail, in order, as Superintendent Biggs often explained, "to facilitate the rapid movement of tourist and through refrigerator trains over our lines." For the most part, these temporary stations comprised small red painted shacks. Occasionally, however, a rheumatic box car was placed in commission.

This policy on the part of the S. U. naturally attracted to its telegraph department a never-ending stream of restless telegraph operators, who came and went with the regularity of sea waves. Usually, they came singly. On June third, however, the day on which division headquarters at Valley decided to install a temporary "O.S." station at Sunny Mount, a point sixty miles west, two lightning-slingers arrived simultaneously.

These were Terrence McRae and Billy McKay. After many ups and downs over two thousand miles of rail, they landed safely in the Valley yards at noon in box cars U. P. 7644 and S. P. 5899, respectively. Strange to say, neither knew of the other's presence in the Colorado town, until by some queer twist of fortune, they came face to face in front of the Dew Drop Inn, a small refreshment hostelry a hundred yards east of division headquarters. Then they discovered they were old friends—they had worked a New York stock wire together out of the Chicago Board of Trade. From that moment they became inseparable.

"Before attaching ourselves to a corporation's payroll," suggested Terrence, producing one lone coin, "let us first regale our drooping spirits with several high ones."

Together the two dusty travelers entered Dew Drop Inn, drew nigh unto a friendly counter, and were served. When their last bit of refreshment had disappeared, they headed straight for the S. U. despatcher's office, which was located in a sad-eyed building near the depot. Just before entering, Bill took from the upper portion of his right sock, one celluloid collar. This he quickly attached to the spacious neckband of his sleeveless shirt. Terrence carefully adjusted a greasy black tie and brushed a stray cinder from his coat. The pair then walked boldly into a zone of clattering telegraph instruments.

Ned Sullivan, chief train des-

patcher at Valley, had in days gone by, served as a wire chief in the Chicago Western Union. For skilled telegraphers, he had the greatest admiration, and whenever one showed up at Valley, he was pretty sure of a job.

Happening now to look up from a small carload of correspondence that lay on his desk, the chief saw standing at the office railing, two of a telegraphic species that immediately attracted his attention. Terrence was the tallest and thinnest operator he had ever seen, and Bill was the broadest and shortest. Instead of turning them over to his chief clerks for preliminary questioning, as was usually his custom, Sullivan himself rose from his chair, waddled across the floor, and greeted the strangers with an inquiring smile.

"We come," explained Terrence, casting a benignant glance at his silent partner, "from 'C. X.' Chicago. We wish employment at some quiet little spot far removed from the baneful influence of the booze shop and the hock shop. In short, sir, we come to this sunny clime to recuperate—to rehabilitate ourselves physically and financially. 'Tis the prohibition ticket for us."

"I get you," grinned the big chief, "and the fact that you hail from my old camping ground, weighs in your favor. To tell the truth, you've struck it rather lucky. Sunny Mount telegraph station opens up tonight. It's to be a day and night office. Sunny Mount is nine thousand feet high. The air is fine, fishing is good, and the town is dry. It's a baching job—you live and sleep in the station and cook your own meals. Report trains promptly, copy the train orders, and your seventy-five per month will come regularly. Better get what groceries you want at Mulligan's general store here. You can't get them up there. No. 5 leaves in half an hour. The conductor on that train will have your passes. Good-bye, boys."

Terrence and Bill hastened to Mulligan's general store. There they ordered flour, coffee, cornmeal, potatoes, condensed milk, sugar, salt, pepper, canned cornbeef, beans, butter, eggs, bacon, smoking tobacco and baking powder. The bill came to $6.78, which amount was charged to their account. Ned Sullivan had squared matters for them over the 'phone.

"Bill," remarked Terrence rather gloomily as the two started for the depot, "do you think we can learn to cook our own grub?"

"Yes," responded Bill; "I once washed dishes in a restaurant at Minneapolis and I picked up quite a few ideas there about cooking. Anyway, this is too good a job to pass up."

At three o'clock that afternoon, two travellers, carrying a heavy gunny sack, alighted from westbound passenger train No. 5 at Sunny Mount.

What they saw was a weather-beaten box car of dull red color, standing on a short spur some ten feet from the main line. It was labelled "SUNNY MOUNT," and contained two windows and one door. This comprised all there was of Sunny Mount.

Too surprised for utterance, Terrence McRae and his old partner dejectedly mounted the shaky steps leading into the box car—22 by num-

ber—opened its door and entered.

Two iron wires—the train despatching circuit—entered the car near the roof, dropped down to a tiny switchboard on its wall, and finally terminated at the one telegraph set—a box relay with a sending key—which rested on a rough board table. A package nearby was found to contain "31" train order forms, three signal lanterns, three flags, some carbons and clearance slips. A rusty cook-stove, some dirty kitchen utensils, a can of signal oil, a lamp and a box of coal, stood in one corner, while in the other was a small wooden bunk covered with a straw mattress and containing several blankets. Two soap boxes served as chairs.

No. 5 had already pulled out when the two fully realized that they were the only inhabitants of Sunny Mount. They looked at each other; they looked at their faded clothing; they looked at the bag of provisions from Mulligan's store. Then Terrence walked to the telegraph set and yanked a small plug out of the switchboard.

The lone instrument awoke with convulsive thuds.

"V. D." being the telegraphic call for Valley despatchers' office, the tall operator began calling that office. "V. D." answered promptly.

"What's the call for this superannuated shed on wheels," asked Terrence.

"S. M.," clicked back the unsentimental second trick despatcher.

"Some mansion," echoed Terrence, then O.S.'d (reported) the departed No. 5, and closed the key.

"Bill," said Terrence, turning to his fat partner who was now slowly removing canned goods from the gunny sack, "I guess we'd better try and stick it out, hadn't we? Three months in these hills will put a roll in our jeans that'll stagger our pals back in Chicago. It's really a great opportunity for us."

Bill grunted in the affirmative, and Terrence, having agreed to take the night shift, Bill agreed to work days.

Both suddenly became ambitious. They swept out the dirty car, carried snow water from a nearby spring, and built up a roaring fire in the coal stove. Two hours later, they dined sumptuously on canned corned beef mixed with potatoes, coffee with condensed milk(served in tin cups), and queer-looking corn cakes accompanied by syrup made from granulated sugar.

Things got pretty still about eight o'clock that night. Terrence sat by the fire silently smoking his pipe, while Bill, stub pencil in hand, scribbled on a sheet of company paper. Presently Bill stopped.

"Listen to this, Terrence," he said, "a line to some of the boys in Chicago.

Dear Pals:—

This is some quiet burg. We live in a box car, anchored on a mountain two miles high. Terrence and I are satisfied, though. Tonight, we cooked our own grub—no more of that Clark street hash for us. Fellows, we've discovered the ideal life—no booze, no care, just good eats, and seventy-five bucks monthly. We're saving money every minute we're here.'

"Won't that get 'em goin', Terrence?"

"It sure will," exclaimed Terrence, blowing a peaceful halo of smoke from his stub pipe. "Bill, I never

want to leave here. The scenery is marvellous, no evil companions, no screeching elevated trains to distress the mind; only good air, wholesome food, and healthful rest. What more could man wish for?"

Bill silently folded his letter, placed it in an envelope, stamped it, requested Terrence to hand it to the mail clerk on the flyer, and leaving Terrence in deep reflection by the flickering fire, turned into his hard bunk. "Remember, Terrence," he said, as he rolled into three dark blankets, "you're on duty till 7 A.M. Good night."

For one long month, Terrence McRae and Billy McKay O.S.'d trains, copied train orders, cooked their own meals, washed their own dishes and clothes, practiced total abstinence and economy. What supplies they had needed had always been sent up from Valley by freight. Tourists had come and gone over the Mountain Division of the S. U. road, but none ever stopped off at Sunny Mount. With a feeling akin to envy, Terrence and Bill had gazed at the passing travellers, and looked hungrily into the bright-lighted dining cars that crawled by them in the night and caught occasional whiffs of appetizing foods from the kitchens of these same diners.

There was one thing, however, that irritated them.

The S. U. Company paid its employees but once a month—on the fifteenth. It kept back the first two weeks' pay of each employee. Terrence and Bill started to work June third, consequently on the first pay day, June fifteenth, they received nothing. It was now July third, and their first pay day was still twelve days off.

That night found the two boomers sullen and moody. Terrence had been refused a round-trip pass to Valley that very morning.

"We expect to move the office from Sunny Mount in two weeks," Ned Sullivan had told him. "Stick it out a while longer. I'll fix you out soon."

This reply was far from satisfactory to the tall night man. Of course, Ned Sullivan did not know about the seventy cents. Terrence had earned that amount the night previous by feeding a light engine crew. He wished to circulate that money at once.

At eleven P.M., the two brass pounders sat in the doorway of box car 22, puffing viciously at their pipes. Their eyes had a far-away look.

"Do you remember, Bill," said Terrence, suddenly breaking the silence, "do you remember where we were this time last year?"

"Mike's place on State street," growled Bill reminiscently. "And Terrence, I'd give this whole starved outfit tonight for just one whiff of the good old Chicago river. After all, this is a hell of a life, ain't it?"

Two dimes and two quarters jingled impatiently in Terrence's pocket. He said not a word, but walked to the telegraph key and called swiftly, "V. D."

"I. I. V. D.," answered the despatcher's office.

"I understand there's nothing on the road for three hours after No. 6 goes by," said Terrence, "and she's due here now. May I go to Grizzly Gulch on No. 6 and come back on No.

7 at 3 A.M.? Bill will work for me. I want to get out of this hole for a few hours."

"No," answered "V. D.;" "the superintendent's latest order says that no operator on the division must be given transportation over the road during his working trick. Cheer up! You'll be out of there soon."

Just then No. 6 whistled up the west track, and a moment later her locomotive stood panting in front of Sunny Mount telegraph office. After her conductor had received a "31" train order and a clearance, an excited dining-car waiter rushed into the box car with a grip.

"Dis heah grip," imparted the dusky servant, "de boss say you all is to delivah to de dining cah conductah on No. 7."

"Just as you say," agreed Terrence, and grabbing the satchel from the darkey, recklessly flung it into a nearby corner.

When No. 6 had pulled out and Terrence had reported that train's departure, Bill began industriously to sandpaper his one celluloid collar.

"Terrence," he exclaimed as the perspiration rolled from his round face, "why did we come here?"

"'Tis not," retorted his companion, rising to the dignity of his six feet and four inches of height, "'tis not, I say, why we came here, but why we stay here? Bill, I—"

Terrence stopped suddenly. His partner appeared uneasy. A peculiar odor having made itself manifest in the little box car, the two telegraphers eyed each other suspiciously, but uttered no sound.

"As I was about to say," continued Terrence, almost assured that his imagination had led him astray, "I—"

He got no farther.

Bill had already discarded his celluloid collar and was down on all fours near where Terrence had placed the grip which the waiter from No. 6 had given him. A narrow liquid stream issued from beneath it.

"Spirits," gurgled Bill, his sober countenance breaking out in one huge smile. "Smells all the world like the real thing, Terrence."

"Truly," said Terrence, "'tis an odor not unfamiliar."

Bill quickly rose from the floor, took from the table a small sponge, then returning to the grip, soaked up a portion of the stream which issued from its bottom. He smelled the sponge, then Terrence smelled it.

"We must stop the leakage at once," declared Terrence, reaching for the grip and opening it.

A dozen pint bottles rolled out. All were labelled "BOURBON RYE WHISKEY. FIRST QUALITY," and save for one which was broken, none were empty.

"We'll borrow one bottle," exclaimed Bill excitedly, whereupon he snatched one, opened it, half emptied it, then handed it to Terrence. When the remaining contents had been drained, Terrence became strangely talkative and good natured, while Bill grew morose and secretive.

"Cheer up, old block," shouted Terrence rising from the floor. Methinks 'tis the dawn of liberty that approacheth. Did not our forefathers sign the Declaration of Independence on July Fourth? Was it not Patrick Henry who so valiantly declared 'Give

me liberty or give me death'? We want our liberty, Bill. Box car 22 shrieks for liberty. The S. U. refuse to let us go to Valley. My boy, 'tis up to you and me to declare independence at Sunny Mount."

"How can we do what you say," asked Bill in a voice permeated with deep gloom. "I wish we could do it. I'm sick of every blasted object in this old wreck. My own cooking gives me the jim-jams. But we can't desert the office."

"We shall not desert the office, old pal," returned Terrence, taking a fresh bottle from the grip. "We shall do nothing of the sort. We shall simply free the office. We shall travel à la café à la dining-car. Note the proximity of the main line. See yon key which unlocks the spur switch! And that grip, Bill! What hopes, joys and dreams, lie sealed up in those bottles! No trains on the road for three hours! Bill, July Fourth draws nigh. Shall we lose that precious liberty for which our forefathers fought so hard?"

"Do you mean," asked Bill, suddenly brightening, "surely you don't —"

"I mean that exactly," declared Terrence, comprehending Bill's sudden enlightenment.

Terrence, a hatchet in hand, was now on the roof of the box car.

"Biff! Biff!"

The two iron wires entering there suddenly parted, but immediately bounded together again, thus keeping the circuit intact.

"Plunk, plunk, plunk, plunk!" and the four blocking ties in front of box car 22 rolled into the ditch. Both men were now in action.

"Creak, creak!" Two brakes were released.

Terrence rushed ahead and unlocked the switch leading to the main line. Then returning to the car, he and Bill dragged one tie each to its rear and pushed with all their might on the little telegraph office.

Box car 22 moved slowly across the spur switch on to the main line. Bill jumped aboard, and Terrence, after hastily closing and locking the spur switch, rushed forward and did likewise.

The two former inhabitants of Sunny Mount, a bottle firmly clasped in each hand, sat in the doorway of box car 22 and sang in lusty voice, "Merrily we roll along, roll along," while the ancient car itself began a lively clip down the sixty miles of steep grade to Valley.

More bottles becoming empty, the two merry souls sang louder and louder, even above the dull rumble made by Sunny Mount telegraph office in its wild flight down the mountain.

Twenty minutes later, the night operator at Grizzly Gulch, a station seventeen miles east of Sunny Mount, saw through sleepy eyes, a streak of red wood flash by. He had been asleep and his conscience troubled him. Rushing to the telegraph key of the despatcher's wire, he clicked hastily:

"O.S., O.S., Extra east by 12.20 A. M.," then signed his office call.

"What in the devil are you driving at?" snapped back the third trick despatcher at Valley. "There's not an extra on the road now. Come out of it."

The night man at Grizzly Gulch rubbed his eyes and wondered if he really were daffy.

"But I saw," he tried to explain.

"Wake up," interrupted the despatcher.

In what seemed but a moment later, however, Peaked Hill, a station twenty miles further east saw the same apparition.

"O.S., O.S.," clicked his sounder unsteadily, "Extra East by—"

"Is this whole division going nutty?" broke in the despatcher sharply. "Now, we've had enough of—"

Just then the telephone rang in the despatcher's office. The despatcher left his key open and answered the 'phone. A ranchman two miles east of Peaked Hill reported having seen a runaway train dashing down the mountain toward Valley.

While at this moment the occupants of Box Car 22 were entering the realms of great joy, officials at Valley were plunged into a sea of mental anguish. Jim Riggs, the superintendent, and Ned Sullivan, chief train despatcher, had been yanked out of their beds and summoned to division headquarters.

Just where the S. U. tracks enter the long yards at Valley, a switch connects the main line with a mile stretch of up-grade track which terminates at the Molly Lee mine on the east side of Bald Mountain. On the right side of these tracks which skirt the very edge of the mountain are numerous ore dumps.

Jim Lahey, yardmaster at Valley, happened to be in his office at the west end of the Valley yards when his clerk was notified by 'phone of the supposed runaway train. Lahey had barely time enough to rush out of the shack and open the switch leading to the Molly Lee siding, when a red streak shot by him, plunged over the switch, shot on up the steep incline, rolled along for half its length, then jumped.

The former telegraph office at Sunny Mount went to glory down a three hundred feet ore slide, while, through some act of a kind Providence, Terrence McRae and Billy McKay, each landed in sitting posture in a bank of soft dirt not twenty feet away. When Yardmaster Lahey found them there fifteen minutes later, Bill still hugged an empty bottle, while Terrence carroled in lagging note, "O'er the d-e-e-p blue s-e-a."

Late the next day, two dusty travellers wended their way eastward over the hot roadbed of the S. U. Presently they stepped into the waiting-room of a small depot to glance at a telegraph order on its bulletin board. The order stated:

"Taking effect July fourth, the telegraph office at Sunny Mount is discontinued. Office was removed last night. The S. U. Railroad Company has decided to discontinue the use of box cars as telegraph offices."

"After all, Bill," reflected Terrence sadly, "progress is the sign of the times. But come, let us move on toward God's country. Handling messages on the grain wires at Chicago beats leading the simple life on a mountain top all hollow."

Beyond the Foot of the Bed

BY J. H. LANDIS

A doctor consecrates his life and skill to the detection and punishment of the man who deceived his daughter.

URING my service in St. Elizabeth's Hospital, many queer bits of human wreckage came under my observation, but none presented to a greater degree the strange qualities possessed by the case of Doctor Stern.

Even now, after a lapse of five years, when not engaged in some critical case of pneumonia or typhoid or perhaps a diphtheritic croup, the events of those few weeks pass in review, indelibly etched upon my memory as if with acid.

Grotesque, distorted portions of it haunt my dreams, if I am to believe Mrs. Samson, for at odd intervals she awakens me in the midst of a nightmare with a request to "sleep on your side—and forget Doctor Stern."

He came to the hospital one cold January night, a finished ruin. He was a pathological museum; a drug fiend through the use of cocaine and morphine; a chronic alcoholic; and a carrier of a weird verminous collection; he was also a victim of consumption, of organic disease of the heart and kidneys; dropsical, and on the hair line separating sanity from delirium.

He gave me my first shock just after I had ordered a dose of "20-30." "Pardon me, Doctor," he said, "but if you will permit me to suggest a remedy that has stampeded the pink elephants in the past, I believe that I shall be on the road to recovery in the morning."

He named one and backed his choice with such logical arguments that it was tried. His condition next morning showed such marked improvement that he became the "star" patient in St. Elizabeth's.

Nothing but my Puritan training can account for the confession which follows. Doctor Stern taught me the use of drugs, placed me in touch with remedies, the proper use of which I had never dreamed of before, although I had "what the books say" at my finger tips.

Without exception, he was the most logical man in medicine that I have ever known; knew more about the treatment of annoying symptoms, and could come nearer predicting just what a remedy would do.

All of this came out by degrees, during his stay in the ward. During the first few weeks he was like a wild man as he fought his craving for cocaine and morphine. I can see him now, his little wild gray eyes, keen as dagger points, his whole body in constant motion, his ideas coherent, his conclusions proven by the results obtained.

He knew physiology and pathology, and the sympathetic nervous system, the affinity of some particular drug for some particular organ or tissue, and just why and how it did this or that.

He was reticent; I can see that now, although apparently, he talked freely of his past. He had been all over the world; his explanation being that he had been an inveterate hunter for ten years. Hunter! How little I understood that expression at the time, although I recall his change of expression—jaw grim and set, nostrils dilating for an instant, the whole face as though cut from stone.

His real past came out by degrees; a past of which he was not a part, for he told his story in the third person, and it was not until after the grand climax, that I suspected the truth, and not until later on, that investigation proved it true.

He was a graduate of a famous college, an interne in an equally famous hospital; his hobby, the study of drugs and their application to diseased conditions—a rare combination in medicine.

He married. A child—a girl—was born, but the mother died at her birth; after which he had three hobbies—drugs, disease, a developing child.

His story of the girl's babyhood, the first intelligible words spoken, her talks to her dolls, her conversation with a make-believe sister, the thousand and one vagaries that come to all children, followed l o g i c a l l y throughout the years.

It was the story of the development of a rare character, a child with a woman's brain, one with uncanny intellectual endowment, gifted, almost beyond belief, with touch and voice in music.

At sixteen, she was a budding genius; at seventeen, nothing seemed surer than a brilliant career in music; at eighteen, Jack Burgoyne made his appearance and, in a day, the heavens came tumbling about the ears of Doctor Stern.

It was a "runaway" marriage; a "romance," according to the local press; in reality, a tragedy with the world for its stage, the scene shifting from day to day: burning desert sands, arctic winters, wild wastes of water, tropical island, workhouse, saloon, gambling hell, opium den, a ceaseless kaleidoscopic whirl of time and place, a reproduction of the Inferno, a moving picture of Fear in Flight, Vengeance in dogged pursuit, Death close at hand.

Investigation of the statements sworn to in the marriage license disclosed the fact that Jack Burgoyne was a myth, his place of residence an impossible number in an obscure street in a great city. At detective headquarters, enough was learned to make it probable that Margaret Stern was the victim of a character so vile that Hell revolted and spewed him forth to curse the earth.

Then it was that a life was dedicated to vengeance, and Doctor Stern had but a single hobby.

Everything of value he possessed was converted into money: horses, buggies, home, furniture, even his book accounts were sold at a discount each week, as he waited for the word that would point the direction the trail had taken.

Eighteen months had passed, and then a brief telegram started the perfect machine. A special train cut many hours from the regular schedule before Doctor Stern stood in the presence of his daughter, in a hospital in a distant city.

No information could be obtained but this: "She was found, beaten to a pulp, on the edge of Chinatown, evidently left for dead, and gave us your address during a lucid interval."

Days of delirium followed, in which Margaret Stern lived over again the horrors that had been hers since leaving her father's home: strange Chinese names, days and nights of unspeakable, indescribable debauchery, against which she fought, tooth and nail; the final murderous assault, in which her outraged body was mauled into a ghastly caricature of its former beauty, and through it all, at every crook and turn, the evil genius of Jack Burgoyne.

Lockjaw developed, and with it consciousness returned.

Her story came slowly through set teeth, interrupted at intervals by terrible convulsions, until the entire, hideous tale had been told.

Jack Burgoyne was a polished, conscienceless degenerate, who led his victims into the Oriental quarters of a large Western city.

Margaret Stern was one of these, and it was not until after she was delivered, a helpless slave, that the true character of the man was made plain.

For eighteen months she had fought a ceaseless battle. New women came, were quickly tamed, and disappeared, but her spirit was never broken. The Orientals quickly learned to fear "The Tigress," and after an unsuccessful, desperate effort on her part, to kill Burgoyne, it was decided to leave her dead body, as a warning to others, on the outskirts of the Oriental quarter.

She died in convulsions in her father's arms, late one afternoon. Throughout the night and morning following, he held her close and thought, prayed and cursed, and crooned over and over again, the cradle songs with which he had lulled her to sleep when she was an infant.

Shortly afterward, a new doctor appeared within easy call of the Chinese quarter. His reputation as a skilful physician was soon established, and despite the fact that he became an opium smoker, his practice grew from day to day.

Strange cases, invariably terminating fatally, began to occur among those "higher up" in the Chinese vice ring. Men apparently in normal health would complain of stiffness of the muscles of the jaws and neck, and within forty-eight of seventy-two hours, would die in convulsions.

As these deaths invariably followed an opium smoking debauch, they were attributed to peculiar poisonous effects from that drug, which had never before been recognized by the medical profession. Their similarity to attacks of lockjaw was commented upon, but the absence of a wound led to the exclusion of that disease as the cause of death. I recall the transient, cynical smile on the doctor's face when he reached this part of his story.

After each death, the new doctor would take a paper upon which appeared a list of strange Chinese

names, and draw a red line through the name of the one that had died.

The new doctor rapidly became a man of mystery. He was given to periods of absence, months sometimes elapsing after his disappearance, before his return, which would be as sudden and mysterious as had been his departure.

Cocaine and alcohol were added to opium smoking, and it was rarely that he was not under the influence of one or all of these.

During his absence he penetrated to all parts of the world: the Sandwich Islands, Alaska, Death Valley, Mexico, the Philippines, China, Egypt; to every nook and corner where the White Slaver plied his trade or sought concealment, he searched for Jack Burgoyne.

Heart-breaking disappointments, occuring over a period of ten years, only served to strengthen his purpose. At times, he was so close on the trail that but a few hours prevented them from coming together.

Burgoyne seemed to have developed a sixth sense. Time after time, the doctor learned that a few hours or a few days before his arrival at a certain point, Burgoyne developed a strange restlessness and then, in a sudden panic of apprehension, hurriedly packed his effects and disappeared.

Opium, cocaine and alcohol, were making slow inroads on the iron constitution of Doctor Stern. On several occasions, debauches, following disappointments, terminated in long workhouse sentences. An attack of rheumatism confined him in a hospital and left him with a damaged heart. A cough had developed, and everything indicated that tuberculosis—nature's favorite method of eliminating the unfit—had a firm grip on his lungs. Dissipation had destroyed his earning power, not because of loss of ability, but because he was never fit to practice.

The chair car and the sleeper had given way to the blind baggage and the brake beam, as means of transportation.

Seven weeks had passed since Doctor Stern's admission to the hospital. Freedom from drugs had given nature an opportunity to partially regain the lost balance. He would never be well, but with proper care, several years of comparative comfort were assured.

Working in the capacity of ward orderly, he was given what amounted practically, to control of the other patients.

He was becoming restless, however, and several times spoke of leaving the institution. This restlessness grew and was marked by a peculiar alertness that caused me to believe that irresistible drug craving was developing.

One morning, on my rounds, I found him busy with another bit of human wreckage, a man apparently about thirty-five years of age, who appeared to be dying of pneumonia. I have seen a great many cases complicated by a terrifying delirium, but nothing that ever approximated this one. He glanced continually about, rolling his eyes in abject terror. His rambling talk was an incoherent jumble of cities, countries, women's names, names of ships, and occasionally that of Chinese men or cities, with an element of haste, as if con-

stantly under the necessity of being on the move. In the three days that the delirium continued, he covered more territory than had the Wandering Jew in nineteen centuries.

Doctor Stern managed his case from the beginning, compounding and administering his medicines and supervising the preparation of his food. He insisted upon keeping the daily record; pulse and temperature, in black ink, respiratory rate in red. I have that record before me now—a model that physicians and nurses could adopt with profit; on it, the key that unlocked the mystery of Doctor Stern's life, and of the sudden deaths in the Chinese quarter.

With returning consciousness, the globe trotting ceased, but the hunted, furtive looks continued.

Doctor Stern's coming and going had a peculiar affect upon him. I noticed this one day when, trying to talk with him, he suddenly turned his eyes toward the door and watched it intently, apparently dead to my questions. Presently, I heard footsteps. His face was a study—a picture of dread; eyes bulging, perspiration standing in beads, and then a puzzled look and long sigh of relief, as Doctor Stern entered the ward.

He improved rapidly and soon was up and about. Every time I saw him, I felt as if the Destroying Angel had been cheated, and I resented it. Although I could find no reason for this feeling, every time I looked at him or thought of him, I had to argue myself out of wishing that he had died.

Several nights later, while performing a minor emergency surgical operation, a series of blood-curdling shrieks threw the entire hospital into an uproar.

Investigation disclosed the fact that the recent pneumonia case was the cause of all the trouble. From his chattering, gibbering terror, we finally were led to believe that an unusually realistic nightmare was the cause, although he claimed, with every evidence of sincerity, that he "saw her there, just beyond the foot of the bed near the opposite wall."

Doctor Stern suggested a hypodermic injection, and I dismissed the incident from my mind.

Next morning, the sisters and patients vigorously protested because of the ceaseless bedlam of the night. Our convalescent pneumonia patient "saw her there, just beyond the foot of the bed, near the opposite wall," at frequent intervals during the night, and each appearance was followed by maniacal-like outbreaks.

Doctor Stern was indefatigable in his ministrations and pronounced it the most interesting case he had ever seen.

The second night was like the first and left the patient almost on the verge of imbecility. Powerful hypnotics were administered, and for thirty-six hours he lay in a semi-stupor, and the ward slept.

At the end of that time, Doctor Stern directed my attention to a new condition. The patient's jaws were set and he complained of stiffness of the muscles of the neck. Had his body shown evidence of a wound, I would have said "lockjaw."

I saw him again in the evening, and there was no doubt of the diagnosis; tetanus was to finish a job too tough

for pneumonia to conquer. From a clinical point of view, this case would have delighted the heart of the text book writers. A breath of air, the closing of a door, the turning on of an electric light, the slightest touch, all were sufficient to start the convulsions.

I had never seen Doctor Stern so clumsy before. During the half hour that I watched the patient, he had four general convulsions. The first was caused by Doctor Stern closing a door rather violently, the second followed when he dropped a cup and saucer on the floor, the third when he stumbled against the foot of the bed, and the fourth, after turning on an electric light.

Back would go his head almost between his shoulders, then the body would bow until only the heels and back of the head touched the mattress.

The disease ran an unusually violent and acute course.

It was three o'clock in the morning when the climax came. I had been called to see a surgical case that was developing alarming symptoms, and decided to look in on the lockjaw patient. My approach to the door of his ward was as noiseless as possible. A solitary, incandescent lamp was burning. Doctor Stern sat with his back toward the door, leaning over the bed, watching the patient, who was just coming out of a convulsion.

Doctor Stern's attitude of strained alertness caused me to stand quietly, waiting for developments. They came quickly. The convulsion ceased, breathing became more regular, and the bluish color of the face gave way to one of almost normal color.

Doctor Stern hurriedly wrote several notes on the history chart, opened the patient's night shirt, and dipping his finger in the black ink, made a series of marks on his breast. Then he leaned over whispering, struck himself violently on the chest and pointed toward the foot of the bed.

The look of fear that swept the sick man's face might have represented the concentrated terrors of a lifetime.

Then a peculiar thing happened. A cone-shaped ray of light shot out from near the head of the bed, and following it to the poirt where it struck the opposite side of the room, I saw, thrown upon the white-painted wall, the head and bust of a beautiful young woman.

It remained but an instant, possibly while one might count five rapidly, and then disappeared. A hissing sound came from the sick man's bed, ushering in his last convulsion. With heels and head set, his body gradually arose from the bed, until it formed a perfect bow. The bulging eyes were directed toward the picture on the wall. His face, set in a hideous, sardonic grin, rapidly changed in color until it was almost black.

Doctor Stern dipped his finger in the red ink, tore open the dead man's night shirt and drew a line across his chest. He seemed to grow years older in an instant, and a great stream of blood shot from his mouth, and bloody bubbles rolled down his chin, as he fought for breath.

I picked the doctor up and laid him on a nearby cot. He made desperate efforts to speak before he died, but all I could distinguish

were the words "under the scalp."

On the floor was a small piece of mechanism resembling very closely a telegraph instrument with thin wires attached. I closed the key, and the cone-shaped ray of light shot forth and again threw the picture on the wall.

Following the wires, I found a diminutive magic lantern concealed in a small closet, and so placed that the rays emerged through the keyhole of the door. The picture carried the name of the photographer and that of a small city in Indiana.

I looked at the body of the lockjaw victim and found a red line drawn across the initials "J. B.," which had been printed in black ink on his chest.

I picked up the history chart, and in the space reserved for the patient's name, found the initials "J. B.," the ink not yet dry; a little lower down, in the space reserved for the cause of death, appeared "Dr. S."

With the two men sent to the dead room, I sat down and began to piece the ends of the story together.

This victim of lockjaw had no wound to account for a point of infection. The Chinese dying in the Western city had no wounds upon which to base a diagnosis of that disease. How did they receive their infection?

I went over again the last terrible scene in the ward, and Doctor Stern's words, "under the scalp," fairly shrieked themselves into my ears.

I went to the dead room and carefully shaved the head of "J. B." Near the crown, a little red spot appeared, and running forward for an inch and a half, a hard, raised line could be felt under the scalp.

Next day, our laboratory man made cultures from along this line, and the characteristic growth of the tetanus bacilli appeared in due time. To make sure, guinea pigs were inoculated and died of the disease.

The photographer was communicated with, readily identified the picture, and furnished information making it possible to complete the story.

Doctor Stern was buried beside his wife and child.

Many stop beside the huge boulder that marks his grave and speculate as to what mystery is concealed in the words: "As Is This Stone, So Was He."

debt, ever hovering before the brave young soul and shaking a bony, menacing finger in the face of all his hopes. And when he had finished, the girl with the turquoise ear-drops was wiping her eyes openly, and the frowsy individual was blowing his nose quite violently, and even the voluble Hebrews were furtively fingering their small change.

"It may be to save a life," he added, "it may be a tribute to the dead—for even for our dead we must pay toll—but whatever it is used for, I am sure I need not ask you to give. Bread upon the waters, you know," but he stopped, for Othilie, with an impulsive little laugh, had seized her father's hat and started around the room.

"Here," cried the Baron, "I will start it," and he extracted from a well-worn wallet a dollar bill, and only the shrewd eyes of the professor observed that no farewells were necessary, for it had lain in the wallet in unbroken solitude. And if he dropped it in the hat a little lingeringly, why, the gift was the greater, and it was not lonely very long, for it is the poor who are most kind to the poor, and coins rained into the hat, while the Baron seating himself at the piano once more, drew from its reluctant keys all the story of poor Anton's heartbreak in the pulsating chords of "The Rosary."

"The hours I spent with thee, dear heart—" and it is safe to say that the thoughts of every listener strayed from their companions of the moment, that every man who heard it called to mind the vision of another woman, fairer for being veiled with the illusion of Time and Distance—and every woman secretly dwelt upon the "might have beens," and conjured up the image of another man.

"Oh, memories that bless and burn—"

Then Othilie stood before him, smiling and rosy, and held up her spoils and, as he counted it, clapped her hands in childish glee.

"One hundred—one hundred and one—*ach*, more yet?"

It was not until one hundred and twenty had been counted into the salad-bowl brought by one of the waiters, that the Baron stopped, and the announcement of the result was greeted with cheers and hand clapping.

In the midst of the applause, the door opened and Anton entered the room. There was an instant silence, then rising from their seats they all awaited the verdict, breathlessly. The man made his way straight to the piano.

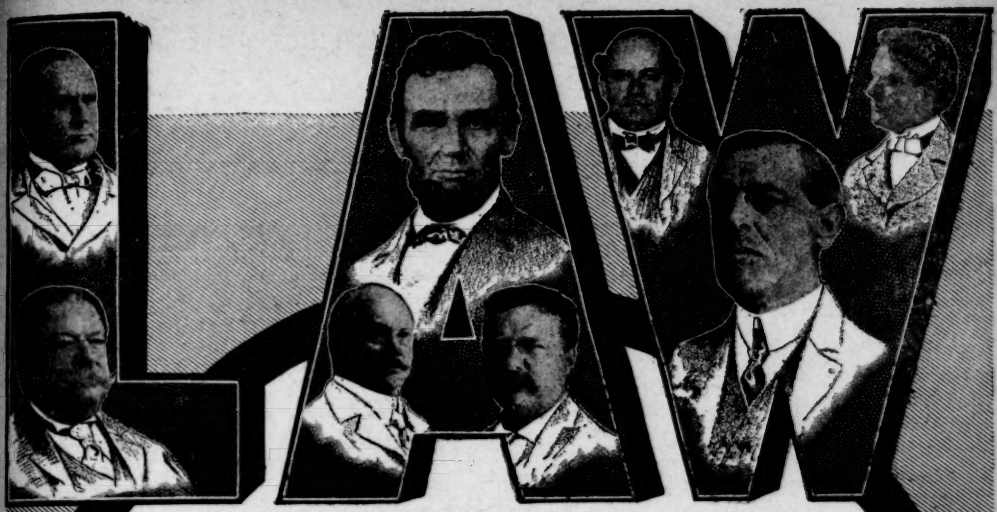
"What is it?" the Baron asked huskily. "Quick! Tell us the news."

"Oh, mein Herr Baron, she is better—she will live!" he cried, his face shining with a great relief, and then he stopped perforce, drowned by a sudden storm of cheers. He looked about him dazedly, and first brushing his eyes with the back of his hand, the Baron seized the bowl from the top of the piano and held it out to him.

"Here, Anton, is a little Christmas gift for the boy!"

But the continued strain on his

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 52]



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emotions had reached the breaking point, and tears of joy making speech impossible, Anton could only drop on his knees, and seizing the Baron's hand, cover it with grateful kisses.

The Baron cleared his throat violently. "Here," he said, almost roughly, "get up, boy, and count your money—and—and get back to work. I shall now resign in your favor. These good people would like some rag-time once more."

"Yes; give us a tune, Anton," they shouted; "*you're* all right!"

But Anton had recovered his voice and was desperately trying to express his thanks.

"And you, Herr Baron—never can I thank you till the longest day I live already—never can I do enough for you—"

But the Baron interrupted. "Thank me? Thank me?" he chuckled. "Stop thanking me and pay me that fifty cents you promised me. Come—give me my money, for I must go."

Laughing, but covered with confusion, Anton picked fifty cents from the bowl and handed it to the Baron, who took it with a grave bow. Only the eagle-eyed professor noticed that he used it to pay for his simple meal, and that he apparently forgot to leave a tip.

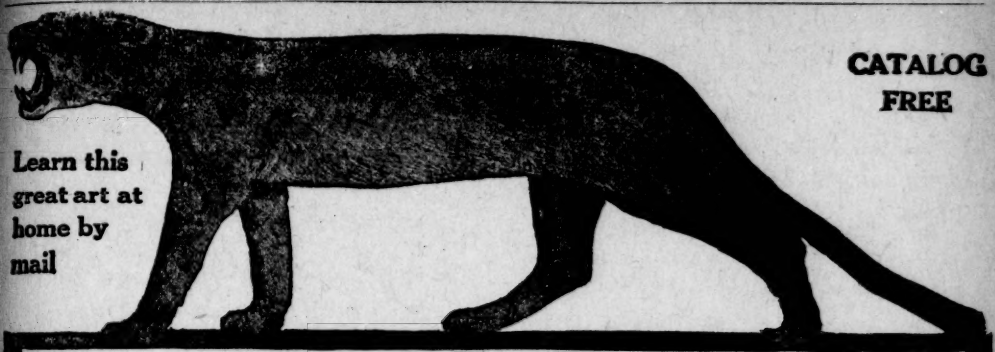
Deferentially, the head waiter helped him on with his well-worn coat, then joined in the "Three cheers for the Baron." Courteously, he bowed to the motley assembly, then turning to Othilie, he gravely raised her fingers to his lips.

"Herr Baron—er—would you do us the very great honor to dine with us tomorrow night, eh?" the professor asked eagerly. "It is but a simple home, but mein klein tochter is en prochtful cook—und her weiner-schnitzel—m-m-m, it melts in der mouth—und mit dopfel-brau—m-m!"

And the Baron gave one look into the hyacinthine eyes raised so earnestly to his and accepted, clicking his heels together and bowing low.

And out in the snowy night he held his head a little higher and his back a little straighter, and with his eyes on the stars and a smile on his lips, he hummed as he walked:

"Oh, little town of Bethlehem—how still I see thee lie—"



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of this. Looks to me like a rather heavy dose of some drug; but I don't place it. Might be a hemp derivative. Take hold of his shoulders, will you."

Together they carried the limp form down the hall and deposited it on a couch in the doctor's office.

"Now clear out," ordered Blake. "Go back to your office and if I want you, I'll send for you. My assistant can give me any help I need. Your friend ought to be able to talk more 'nonsense' to you in half an hour." It was evident that the doctor was not pleased by the evasion of his question.

Back in his office Grayson paced the floor restlessly, waiting for the doctor's message. He was deeply disturbed. Mingled with his uneasiness over Gordon's condition was another and more poignant distress.

Those toneless, muttered words were surely but the wanderings of delirium, yet he struggled in vain to dismiss them from his mind. Carefully he examined the list of properties which Gordon had given him. There was no mention of the Brixton Lode, nor did the name of Undervetter appear. The words meant nothing to him, yet somehow the delicate fabric of his faith was shattered.

In an effort to crowd out the ugly suspicions that lurked in the dark corners of his brain, he picked up the letter from Jerry Harkness and read it anew; but the magic of the dream had vanished.

The care-free, gold-laden voyager of his recent visions faded, and he saw in his stead an indolent fool, loitering a thousand miles from his duty, the legitimate prey of rascals at home and abroad.

The door opened and Gordon stepped into the room, showing only by a slight pallor, the effects of his late experience. Beside him was the mystified Blake.

"Never saw a case like it," exclaimed the latter. "He was conscious ten minutes after you left, before I had really done anything for him. Half an hour ago I would have sworn he was drugged, yet the symptoms have disappeared and he is positive he hasn't taken anything. I'll confess that I don't understand it." He went away, shaking his head.

Gordon walked steadily to the chair he had occupied during their long talk.

"It's queer, Fred," he said; "but I have only the most confused memories of anything that happened after you asked me to take charge of your properties. I don't know what happened to me, but I'm clear as a bell, now. Tell me where we left off and we'll go on from there."

A feeling of shame for his suspicions swept over Grayson as he looked into those clear grey eyes and felt again the charm of that strong, dependable personality. Yet he felt that he must dispel his doubts once and for all.

"You were advising me to check up the list—mentioned something about omissions," he said mendaciously. "I don't find here any record of the Undervetter timber lands or the Brixton Lode. Were they

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 56)

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what you referred to?" He held his breath as he waited for the other's reply.

The broker's eyes shifted and his face grew crimson. Then, in an instant, he regained control of himself.

"That must have been it," he agreed quietly. "I noticed that those two properties were not scheduled and intended speaking of them. Of course the papers are in the vaults with the others. When do you expect to sail?"

With an effort Grayson held his voice to a casual tone.

"That is hard to say. You urged the duties of the millionaire so strongly that I may not go at all.

At that tense moment, through the half-open door of the private office sounded the click of the railing gate and a chuckle. With the distressed office boy at his heels, Saul Ashcroft, the curio dealer, waddled in.

"Gimme that sword," he cried, and made a dive for the weapon.

"You missed a bargain," he jeered at Grayson. "That snickersnee was made for Mustapha the First, who was Sultan of Turkey about two hundred years before Abdul Hamid. It's a trick affair—hasn't any blade. It's a sort of over-grown hypodermic. If you try to unsheath it, and grip it the way a man naturally would if he was used to handling weapons, a little needle comes out and shoots your hand full of dope."

"That's it!" exclaimed Grayson. "That explains it!"

"They call it some double-jointed name that means 'The Blade of Truth,' and from the time of Mustapha down to the day it was stolen it has been used by the Sultans of Turkey to test their body-guard.

"They made each new man try to draw the blade, and after he got his shot of dope they listened to what he had to say. If there were any nice little assassination plots in his mind he would literally talk his head off, for that's the way the stuff worked. The thing he had been carefully guarding against telling was the very thing he would blurt out when the drug got into his system. And the Sultan would do the rest."

Gordon turned a troubled gaze on Grayson.

"The tale sounds fishy, of course," he said; "but I remember handling that sword and I don't remember much after that. Did I—"

Grayson met his eyes fairly.

"Yes, Charlie," he said with deliberate meaning, "you did."

The curio dealer was so excited that his fat hands shook.

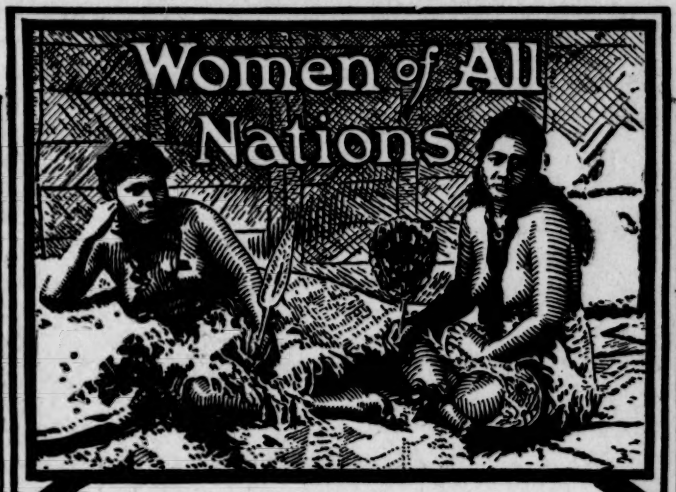
"By George!" he ejaculated. "I've a good mind to try dickering with the Turkish Goverment. For the purpose it was made for, this thing is worth—it's worth—a hundred thousand dollars!"

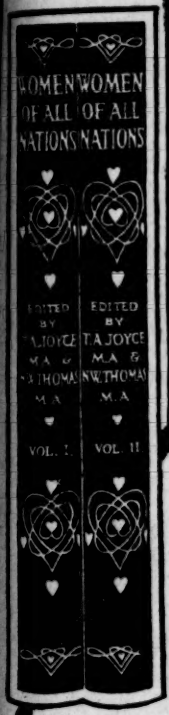
Grayson thought of the future, of the properties scattered from Maine to California, of the many men to whom he must give some measure of trust.

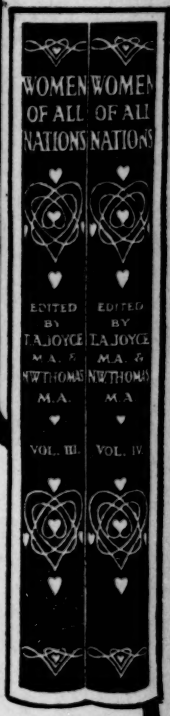
"I will give you a hundred thousand for it," he said quietly.

"You?"

"It appears that I am to be a Sultan of Finance." He shot a swift glance at the shamefaced broker. "I shall need it more than Abdul Hamid."







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boats enough to care for her people; and meanwhile, Hager made hasty examination of their own damage and came back grinning.

"We'll be for needing some new plates," he reported, "but the old bucket's seaworthy yet. Built like an ice-breaker, she is, forward, sir. In a smooth sea like this—" he waved a hand at the gentle swell, over which the boats were pulling away from the stricken ship—"in a sea like this, it'll be all in the day's work for us. And they can make shore easy enough."

"This day's work ain't done till I get Bill Shields back again," the skipper declared stoutly. His hand went to the engine-room telegraph, but the signal to McLeod to go ahead was not given. He had turned to look at the Barcelona and what he beheld made him pause.

"By the Lord Harry, Hager, here's a game I don't fathom!" he exclaimed.

Hager stared, and well he might. The Barcelona, having steamed through a great curve, was heading back. As she passed the Baillie Dutton, the brand-new flag was lowered thrice in undeniable salute. Then, for a little, she was busy, rounding up the fugitive boats and taking aboard their crews as prisoners of war. This done, she moved toward the halted tramp, stopped her engine and dropped a cutter, into which stepped three passengers, a little man —"the cuss that worked the song and dance," Hager explained, Bill Shields, and a personage glorious in gold lace and waving plumes. Something was handed down to the coxswain. Skipper Jimmy whistled wonderingly, but not with disapproval.

"Talk o' signs of clearing weather, Hager! If that ain't a basket of champagne—"

Hager turned with unwonted swiftness and struck up the muzzle of the ancient fowling-piece young Manning was training over the rail.

"Belay there!" he shouted. "That thing might go off by mistake and smash a bottle!"

"Right you are, Hager!" Captain Jimmy nodded. "Looks like a peace commission, this does. And Bill Shields don't seem to be harboring grudges, does he? Got an arm round the little chap's neck, by thunder!"

The cutter splashed merrily up to the Baillie Dutton. Bill Shields was first up the side. He had a black eye, but his grin was cheery.

No need of shooting, Captain," he said to Jimmy. "Coon's ready to come down, and come down handsome —if you'll let bygones be bygones and fix up a little deal he's got on his mind. That's him," he added, jerking his head at the personage who had achieved the deck with the aid and support of the little man. "He's the works—work him!" And Mr. Shields winked most significantly.

The personage doffed his plumed hat and bowed low, while the little man recited his sonorous title and no less sonorous name.

"General who's going to be an admiral as soon as he gets his sea-legs," Shields explained *sotto voce*. Then he bent over the rail to receive into his personal care the basket handed

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 60)

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up by the grinning coxswain.

Skipper Jimmy frowned. Things promised well, but it would never do to let the kidnapping of Jennie's brother pass too lightly.

"Tell him, one of you, that I've got a full sized bone to pick with him," he said coldly.

The little man jabbered and the general waved a deprecatory hand. Then he turned to gaze at the sinking gunboat and beamed expansively.

"*Mag-neef-eek!*" he cried, and bowed again to Skipper Jimmy.

Shields nudged his captain. "That ramming job caught his fancy," he whispered. "Likes it so much, he does, he'll take it off your hands—see? Sure he will! He thought he needed a cracking good chief engineer, but he's ready to give me back, and a lot to boot, if you'll just let the word pass that he did it with his little Barcelona—get that? And, of course, he foots all bills for my time and trouble, and yours, and for any dents in the old Baillie Dutton."

"Eh?" said Skipper Jimmy dubiously, and not quite understandingly.

Bill Shields chuckled. "Stir your wits, Captain. He can tend to his own romancing and history-making at this end of the line, but it'd be worth good money to a rising young revolution to have it reported by the master of the Baillie Dutton, arriving in New York, say, from the Caribbean, that the dashing Barcelona rammed and sank the flagship of the dictator. And this crowd's all right on the ready cash—Junta's fair oozing money at every pore."

The skipper's face was clearing. "Well, I suppose I might think it over," he admitted.

Shields lowered his voice. "Course there's another point. If you got hailed into court, you might have trouble proving your leave and license to go rampaging round the high seas, running down inoffensive war boats. This old party's aching to take all responsibility off your hands; he's willing to pay for the privilege. So, taking one thing with another, I allowed you'd be sensible and suggested they might as well bring along a dozen of fizz-water to wash down the deal good and proper."

"O-ho!" said Skipper Jimmy. The severity of his expression relaxed still farther; he began to move toward his cabin. "Well, I don't know why they shouldn't have what they can pay for—even if it is a hero."

"'Ero'!" The general caught the word, and repeated it glibly. "'Ero'! *Si, si.*"

Then he bowed to Captain Jimmy quite as magnificently as before; straightened his back; and tapped the decorations on his manly chest.

"'Ero,' too!" he repeated, and his tone verged on the ecstatic.

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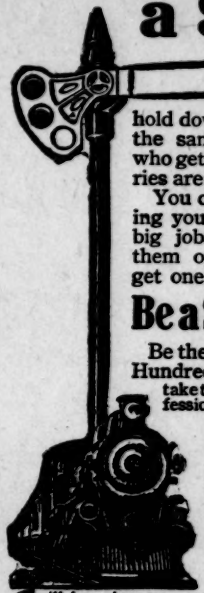

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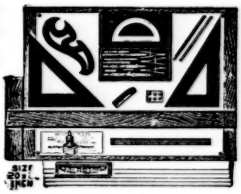

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